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THE HAWBUCKS

By JOHN MASEFIELD

COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS — CAPTAIN MARGARET — MELLONEY HOLT-
SPUR — THE EVERLASTING MERCY AND THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET
— A MAINSAIL HAUL — RIGHT ROYAL — THE OLD FRONT LINE — REY-
NARD THE FOX, OR THE GHOST HEATH RUN — KING COLE — THE FAITH-
FUL — THE DREAM, AND OTHER POEMS — A KING'S DAUGHTER — THE
LOCKED CHEST — SALT-WATER POEMS AND BALLADS — LOST ENDEAVOR —
ESTHER AND BERENICE — GALLIPOLI — GOOD FRIDAY, AND OTHER POEMS
— THE DAFFODIL FIELDS — ENSLAVED, AND OTHER POEMS — A SAILOR'S
GARLAND — PHILIP THE KING, AND OTHER POEMS — LOLLINGDON DOWNS,
AND OTHER POEMS — MULTITUDE AND SOLITUDE — THE STORY OF A
ROUND-HOUSE, AND OTHER POEMS — SELECTED POEMS — THE TRAGEDY
OF NAN, AND OTHER PLAYS — THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT —
THE WAR AND THE FUTURE — THE TAKING OF HELEN — SARD HARKER —
THE TRIAL OF JESUS — TRISTAN AND ISOLT — THE MIDNIGHT FOLK —
ODTAA — THE COMING OF CHRIST — MIDSUMMER NIGHT, AND OTHER
TALES IN VERSE — THE HAWBUCKS

THE HAWBUCKS

BY
JOHN MASEFIELD

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1929

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THE HAWBUCKS

CHAPTER I

CONDICOTE is linked to Tatchester by a branch line, nine and a half miles long, upon which the Condicote-Tatchester expresses run to and fro four times daily, Sundays excepted, taking usually fifty-five minutes for the single journey. Of the four daily trains, that arriving at Condicote at 4 P.M., and leaving for Tatchester ten minutes later, is the most attended. On Saturdays, which are market days in Condicote, there may be as many as seventy people travelling back to Tatchester by this train. This company, added to those who are seeing them off or who have come to meet people arriving, makes the little platform crowded.

On a Saturday in the January of the famous open winter, when hounds were not once stopped by frost, the crowd upon the platform waiting for this train was more than usually great. It had been a day of mild, fine weather, with a sun, which was now down behind King Arthur's Camp. It was still daylight, though a porter was lighting the gas in the waiting-room and booking-office. A few minutes before the train was due, Richard, old Mr. Childrey's elderly coachman, drove up the Childreys' brougham from their house, the Bartons. When he pulled up at the station entrance, Nicholas Childrey, a red-lipped, somewhat loose-mouthed man, with plenty of decision in his movements, aged rather under twenty-

eight and dressed in mourning, got out of the brougham, told Richard to wait, and entered the waiting-room.

As he entered, he stopped short to avoid bumping into a short, plump young woman who was coming out. This was Lou Harridew, the daughter of the old Squire. "Ah, Lou," he said, "I suppose you've come to meet Sandy?"

"Yes," she said. "He is coming down for the week-end, and you, I suppose, are coming to meet your brother George?"

"Yes, George landed this morning at Liverpool."

"How long is it since you saw George?"

"Oh, five or six years."

"Why didn't you go to Liverpool to meet him, Nicholas?"

"Ah, I am hardly my own master. I have a good deal to do for the firm; then I've been in charge of the Bartons since my brother died, and with that, and not being quite sure when the ship would come in, I thought it better to stay to meet him here."

"Well, bring George to tea with us to-morrow," Lou said, as she left the room.

"Thanks, I will," Nick said. He went out on to the platform.

Two market women by whom he passed, looking for friends who might be there, nudged each other.

"Young Mr. Childrey," the one said.

"Ah," the other said, "he've got to turn out of the Bartons, now they've found his elder brother. He won't be quite so grand, playing second fiddle, as he is now, ordering folk about."

"There've been some changes at the Bartons, haven't there?" the other said. "Why, it's only a year since old

Mr. Childrey died. Then his eldest son, Mr. Dick, had only time to air the sheets as they say, before he got the fall."

"They do say he was drunk," the bitter woman answered. "He must have been mad or drunk, one or the other, to jump a poor horse at a place like that. Serve him right, I say, that he did break his neck."

"Well, whoever's fault it was," the other answered, "he paid the price of it: all his nice comfortable life and that."

Meanwhile Nick had thrust his way to a cheery and energetic clergyman, who looked as though he would soon be a bishop (as indeed he soon was).

"Ah, Nicholas," the clergyman said, "so you've come to meet your brother, I suppose?"

"Yes, I believe him to be in the train."

"A sad home-coming in many ways," the clergyman said, "to find a father gone and an elder brother gone, too. Let us hope that the new master of the Bartons may be with us for many years."

"George is fairly tough," Nick said. "We should have had him home in October but for that. But we had such trouble to find him. He was riding round America when we did get word of him, doing twenty miles a day, on the one horse. He had done about a quarter of it when we found him."

"Well, men can only be young once," the clergyman said. "In some ways, I suppose, it is just as well. You must bring your brother to see us."

"Thanks," Nick said. "But when George is in the saddle here, I shall not be down so often. I've only looked after the estate while he's been away. I shall be getting

back to harness in town. Excuse me, will you? I must speak a word to the Squire."

When he had gone on along the platform to speak to Squire Harridew, the clergyman moved up to a wild-looking elderly man known as "Old J.," who was a horse-dealer and feed-merchant. Old J. was a coarse-mouthed but very generous man, with a taste for satirical mimicking of those who talked with him. "So Mr. George Childrey is coming to the Bartons to-day," the clergyman said.

"Yes, so I hear," Old J. said.

"Did you know this Mr. Childrey?" the clergyman asked. "I only knew his father and his two brothers. This Mr. George has been away ever since I came here."

"I've known the Childreys ever since they came to the Bartons," Old J. said. "Old Childrey was a tallow-merchant in Liverpool, though a country chap born. He inherited the Bartons from his wife. You wouldn't have seen her, she was a Barton: the Bartons had been there two hundred years and more. There was some go about Mrs. Childrey. She could ride and did. What made her take up with old Childrey I'm beggared if I can think. Of course, he'd made money and put the Bartons on its legs again. Then he left Liverpool and came to live here. You knew the old man?"

"Oh, yes, I knew old Mr. Childrey (not the wife, of course). He was one of the old style, with that great rose-garden and the apple-nursery, and always the hawks on their perches."

"Nasty, messy things I always thought them," Old J. said; "but it was interesting to see them after partridges. However, it was the son that I liked: not that fellow Dick

who broke his neck last year, nor this fine city whipper-snapper, the lawyer Nicholas; who was here a minute ago. It was the middle boy, George, who is coming home to-day, the prodigal son, what?"

"I had not heard that he was prodigal," the clergyman said.

"I don't mean it in a bad sense; I mean it in a good sense," Old J. said. "He was the boy who'd back his life on a cast like a good gamester; not like that chap who was killed or that fellow truckling to the Squire. He got sent away from his school for not doing any work; then they tried a tutor, and then he went to the Agricultural College. Then at the Mop Fair the College had a man knocked out by some of these Welsh drovers. So they turned out to ask about it, and there was what they call a disgraceful fracas. Fracas, my hat!

"My sister's son was at the college at the time. He said that young Childrey was in the row, but not more than fifty others. However, he had his hat knocked over his eyes, or his head knocked through his hat or something, which made him conspicuous, so he was pounced on and made an example of. So he was sent away. They drew him to the station in a hearse, with the college band playing the 'Dead March.' So then the boy went into Wiltshire somewhere, to learn about sheep. Well, you won't find many English boys looking at sheep when they can look at horses. Of course the lad got in with one of these trainers on the Downs. I knew the chap's father years ago: he won the Lincolnshire with what's his name. At the end of about a year, there was a bit of a breeze, for George hadn't learned about sheep, and wanted to train racers. But that isn't quite the job for a younger

son. That elder brother of his, the fellow who broke his neck, Dick; it was he who stopped that; he wouldn't let the old man put up the money. But I must be moving on, sir. I must catch Captain Cannonbone before he gets into the train." He moved off down the platform, to accost a morose-looking, pale-faced man who was chewing the stub of an unlit cigar. "I've been talking to the Reverend Sir," he said, "about how sad it is to find your elder brother gone, and a neat little family estate your own. It fills this vale with tears, I must say."

"You're talking about the Bartons," Cannonbone said. "That feller Dick, who broke his neck, owed me five quid on a game of pool. Will there be any getting it from his brother, who is said to be coming here?"

"I can't say, I'm sure," Old J. said. "No harm in trying. Five quid is always worth putting in for."

"That's what I say," Cannonbone said. "If that feller Dick had married, I'd have put in for it from his widow."

"He was darned near married to that Rosey," Old J. said. "Another month and he would have been. Well, what goes in shrouds is saved in baby linen, as the saying is."

Further down the platform the pretty Violet had just rejoined her mother. "Mamma," she said, "I've just been speaking to Rose. She says that the lost Mr. Childrey has been found, and is coming back to the Bartons by this train."

"So I understand," the mother said. "But your father and I think that we had all better wait before we call at the Bartons. Mr. George Childrey had not a very good name for steadiness before he went to the Colonies, and since then he has twice completely disappeared without

sending either of his brothers a word. However, we shall have plenty of opportunities for judging. We shall quite certainly meet him somewhere before so very long. But I must say that I cannot help thinking it's a pity that his clever brother, Mr. Nicholas Childrey, isn't the heir. He is doing so well in London. He is already a leading man in his firm, they say, although he is so young; and then they say he has managed the Bartons so well, ever since his brother was killed. Now I'm afraid he will see all his good work undone."

Her daughter Violet, being young, felt the charm of the ne'er-do-well, and hoped that she might see him when the train came in.

By this time the train was signalled as having passed the Beggar's Ash Halt a mile away. Old Richard, the Childrey coachman, having left the brougham in charge of Trusty Tim, an old lame man, who got a living by doing odd jobs at the station, came on to the platform to greet his new master and help with the baggage.

"Ah, Richard," Sir Peter said. "I haven't seen you lately. Someone said that you had a cough at Christmas. I hope that that's better?"

"Yes, thank you kindly, Sir Peter," the old man said. "But I'm getting on. I feel the cold more than I used to."

"I must send you round a little rum," Sir Peter said. "I'm getting on myself, and that's what I take. I suppose we are almost the only ones left of those who broke colts for my father."

"We're getting scarce on the ground, Sir Peter."

"You must have broken a lot in your day, Richard."

"A tidy few, Sir Peter. I always still carry carrots and a bit of sugar. A colt loves a bit of petting."

"You had some falls, too, I expect, Richard."

"Ah, I had a few, Sir Peter; but I've come to see they were mostly my own fault. I had some bangs, too, Sir Peter, when I taught 'ee the singlestick, you were so quick on your cuts."

When Sir Peter had moved away, Richard met old Jane, who had been a housemaid at the Bartons more than thirty years before, when he had first come there to be coachman. She had married the Condicote carpenter, who had died. For the last ten years she had been cook to the Bishop of Tatchester. She was a tall woman, rather old-looking for her years, and her face marked with sorrow, and also with a warmth of heart that had been starved of children, except her daughter Jane, who had been more of a trial than a joy.

"Ah, Richard," she said, "I was hoping I would see you. So you've come to bring home Master George?"

"Yes, Jane," old Richard said, "Mr. Nicholas says he'll be in the train."

"Oh, I would love to see Master George," she said. "Of course I was gone from Mr. and Mrs. Childrey before he was born, but I used to see him when he was little. Oh, he was a lovely child. The other two were fine boys, but it was always Master George that took me. And they let him go out alone to those wild places when he was still nothing better than a boy. I wonder they'd the heart to do it. If Mrs. Childrey had been alive, she would never have let him go. It was Mr. Dick working on old Mr. Childrey that made that be. Now you see how Time brings it all about. Here he is coming back to own it all, and his father and Mr. Dick both in their graves."

"Yes, there've been sad doings at the Bartons, Jane,"

old Richard said. "But they've not sold old Bob, old Mr. Childrey's carriage horse. Both Mr. Dick and Mr. Nick wanted to be rid of him, but he hasn't gone yet, poor old soul. I couldn't bear for him to go out into the world after all these years. A horse is like a poor man. There's nothing but the workhouse for him, unless someone stands his friend."

"Master George wouldn't sell his father's old horse," Jane said. "He took too much after his mother for that. Oh, they were happy, blessed days at the Bartons, Richard, when we were with Mrs. Childrey; such a beautiful woman as she was. I was turning out her photograph that she gave me only the other day; of her riding her mare. She was a blessed lady, Richard, and many thought it that think so still, for whenever I go to put flowers on her grave, as I always do, when I'm here at Easter and Whitsun, there are always some there, left by someone; and there can't be many now that will remember her."

"Ah, we're all older than we were, Jane," Richard said; "there's medicines for all things but Anno Domini. It's that that takes us in the end. But there, I see the lights of the train coming. If you'll come up the platform with me a few steps, you'll see Master George as he gets out."

At that instant the station-master and the porter came on to the platform, urging the people to stand further back from the line. "Stand back, please, stand further back, please." There came a rush of young men on to the platform, with cries and catcalls. They were the Much Zennor Rugby Fifteen going back to Tatchester after their match. "Come on, Joe; we'll get in in the front. Where's Bill? Come on, Much Zennor. Rush it,

Zennors," they cried. They thrust somewhat rudely through the throng to the platform end, where they chaffed the signalman, who was staring from his window at the train's approach.

The train made a good deal of noise on its drawing near. It whistled and rumbled and put on the brakes. It came with a glare of light in the fast gathering dusk, came rather too far, as it sometimes did, and stopped at an empty part of the platform. The crowd ran or tottered after it, rather like leaves caught up by the draught of its passing. The doors of the carriages were flung open, and people descended. In the throng, Jane did not see her Master George very clearly. The light was bad, her spectacles were in her pocket, and people were hurrying and bumping. Then Master Nicholas got in between them. She heard Nick's greeting, "Well, here you are, old man, at last, aha." But then she never could abide Master Nicholas since the day he'd been so rude to her husband. She heard George answer, "Hullo, Nick, wie gehts?" which was all the greeting between the brothers after nearly six years of absence. She saw George suddenly recognize the old coachman, who was getting bags from the rack. "Isn't this Richard?" he said. "Why, how are you, Richard? Are you quite well? I hope you've got some colts for me to ride."

"Why, yes, thank you, Master George," the old man said, much pleased; "we've got something of all sorts in the stables, sir. And I hope you're well, Master George."

Jane was pressing up to speak, when the station-master began to cry, "Take your seats, please. Now get in, mum; the train's going to back," so she had to forego the pleasure and enter the train. However, she saw her

Master George, a fine grown man, carrying bags, followed by Richard carrying bags, followed by the porter carrying bags, and accompanied by his brother Nicholas, who carried nothing but his own overcoat. Her heart yearned to him, because in the glimpse she had had of him, she had seen, as one sees sometimes in a face, the face of one loved of old, the face of her beloved mistress, Marjorie Childrey, who had gone so fast over the grass and now lay so quiet under it.

The delay in getting out the bags made the Childreys the last to leave the station. When they came out to the brougham the Harridews' carriage had already gone, and the inn omnibus was starting: two or three traps, loaded with passengers, were going down the station approach; two others, halted at the Railway Inn below, were taking in bottles before proceeding.

Old Richard handed the bags to Trusty Tim and turned to George. "Here's another old friend come out to greet you, Master George," he said. "I think you'll remember old Bob, sir, that your father used to drive."

"Old Bob," George said, "why, good old Bob. Yes, indeed, I remember him. So here we are again, old Bob, and I'm jolly glad to see you. He must be a great age, Richard?"

"Yes, sir, he's a great age, sir, but he's well up to quiet work, sir."

"We'll have soon to put him on show as the oldest carriage horse in work."

"Yes, sir. Your father got him from the old Squire's sale, the year of the great plum crop. But he says he can still take Mr. Childrey home."

"Well, I wish I'd a lump of sugar or a carrot for him."

"Plenty of those for him at the stable, sir."

The Childrey brothers entered the brougham while Richard and Tim, helped by the porter, secured the bags. Presently the brougham moved off to the quiet shuffle of old Bob, who wanted to be back at his stable. January twilight soon dims into a dusk. George, looking out from the window beside him, could hardly make out the landmarks, of trees and lanes, as the brougham passed them. After about half a mile he thrust the window far down, leaned out, and seemed to listen. "I just wanted to hear the brook," he explained. "I'm glad it's still going."

"What, the brook?" Nick said, with some contempt. "Naturally, it's still going."

"A good many things aren't, that were," George answered. Nothing more was said by either brother for the next half-mile; then the brougham turned up the lane and through a white farm-gate into the yew-bordered drive leading to the Bartons.

"Well, here you are at home again," Nick said, opening the door and hopping out. "You won't find much change here."

The brougham had been awaited for the last quarter of an hour. Carriage-lamps hung on rests at both the doors to give light to the drive. As the brougham swung round beside the front door, both doors opened. From the front door came the old housekeeper Sarah, who was also cook; from the back door came the groom, Will Hill, and the two servants, Mrs. Baldock and her daughter Polly. George got down, recognized old Sarah and shook hands with her. "Ah, Sarah," he said, "I'm glad to see you again."

"And we're glad to see you again, Master George," she said. "Welcome home, sir, and I hope we see you well."

"And you too, Sarah. You're younger than you were when I went. Now, who are these? Mrs. Baldock?"

"Yes, Mr. George, please, sir, and I welcome you home, sir, and pray you may have blessings here," Mrs. Baldock said, first curtsying and then shaking hands.

"Thank you, Mrs. Baldock. And is your son here still?"

"No, alas, sir; he's still away with the cavalry."

"And I seem to know this face," George said, looking at Polly. "Is this your daughter Polly?"

"Yes, sir, this is my Polly, that you gave the doll to, that you won at the raffle at the sale of work when she was little. Oh, she's never forgotten that, Mr. George. She's got it still, done up in paper."

"I'm afraid I've forgotten it," George said. "But I'm glad to see you again, Polly." The gardener and cowman, a half-witted man, who was clever at his work, and went by the name of Bingo, welcomed him with the remark that the cows were coming on beautiful as ever he did see: old Richard introduced the groom, a shy, smiling lad, who was waiting for his chance to give a welcome. "This is Will Hill from Mill Hill, sir, that came in in your father's time, Master George."

"How d'you do, Will? Are you the son of Baldy?"

"Yes, Master George, the younger son."

"I remember you, then," George said. "You used to look after your sister. Is she still with you? How is she?"

"She's still with us, sir. I'm afraid she'll never be much better. The bones will never be any stronger, sir."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Is your mother well? And your father?"

"Yes, both very well, sir, thank you, and have their health."

George now turned to enter his home. He glanced up at the carving over the door. It had been put there by the builder of the house, an old Royalist, his mother's ancestor, Sir Philip Barton, who after having ruined himself for his King, at the age of twenty-two, had done well in the East Indian trade in the Restoration, in spite of the Dutch War.

The carving represented Sir Philip, who was rather big, blessing his son, who was very little. As the son was kneeling to receive the blessing, the carver had cut him upon a little hill or barrow, to bring him within range of the uplifted hand. Underneath was the family motto, cut in an abbreviated form, so as to bring it in: "C. U. B. Faithful to His Matie." George lifted his hand to it as he passed underneath it into the house.

There was a moment's discussion in the hall. "Which room will you please to sleep in, Master George?" old Sarah asked. "Old Mr. Childrey's, your father's room, or your own little room? We've got them both ready, with a fire, as we weren't sure which you would choose."

"I'll have my own little room, thanks," George said. He went up to the little room, which was an L-shaped, narrow little place at the east end of the house. It had a window to the north, at his bed's head, looking out over outhouses and the stable-roofs; a window to the east, looking out over the backyard, all stone-built in the time of Queen Anne, and a window to the south, looking over the pond and the Barton pastures. He could see a glow

from lanterns above the stable-yard where old Bob was being put to bed. To the south there was a distant solitary window light, from a cottage at Three Ashes, which he had often watched as a boy. The owls were calling about the house, just as of old. Down in the bakehouse the crickets were chirping. Nothing seemed to have changed except perhaps himself. There were his books and pictures just as he had left them: the fox's mask, with the pads which had blooded him (most bloodily) fifteen years before at Goat's Gorse. There was the plate which had been on the hoof of Sir Thopas when his grandfather had ridden in the Liverpool. There were the pin-feathers from his woodcocks. There even was his air-gun, the pride of his twelfth birthday. He felt that he had come a long, long way, through racket and upheaval, across a continent and an ocean, to reach this quiet, and that now it was to be his forever. That his people had been there for so long (at least his mother's people) touched him. He was sad that he hadn't been at home when his father died; as for his brother Dick, he could feel no grief for Dick. Yet he had a feeling that Dick (like his father) was somewhere about the place, knowing of his arrival. He saw Dick always as he had seen him last, a rather boorish, loutish, full-faced man, saying good-bye at the door, before riding off. He saw him drawing his crop-thong through his fingers, and heard his final farewell: "Good-bye, then. I hope you'll manage the new life better than you've managed the old; that's all." Those were the last words Dick had said to him. He had not replied to them; he had never written to Dick: now Dick was dead and he stood in Dick's shoes.

He unpacked the presents which he had brought for

the household: a buffalo robe for Nick (they could still be had then); an Indian blanket for Sarah, to use as a bedspread; a Mexican blanket for old Richard, as well as a Mexican headstall, heavy with silver plaques and turquoise studs; a small bearskin rug for Mrs. Baldock; a pair of gay bead moccasins that should do for Polly. He had other trophies coming for others, but these he would give straight away, to those who had been with his father to the end. He found a pair of Mexican spurs for Will, and a strong sheath-knife, with a marler at the back, for the gardener. When he had carried these things down, he called his five household servants and gave them the things, so that the hour of his home-coming was a good hour to them all.

There was much for him to do in unpacking and setting in order in his room. He did this slowly, with many visits to the windows, to look out over the darkness. He was very happy to be at home, and above the happiness, which he had felt before, on returns from school, was a new feeling, that all this was unexpectedly his. He would never have come there again had Dick lived and married. Now he was the owner of it all, the man in charge and command, able to do what he chose.

When he had changed, he went down to dine in the panelled dining-room that had a black carved mantelpiece, against which Nick was leaning, waiting for him. Polly and Mrs. Baldock stood ready to serve. For the first time George sat in his father's place, facing the now curtained window.

When he was left alone with his brother, Nick began:

"We had rather a job to find you, and I have had to be

in charge here longer than was right or than I liked. If I've done things of which you disapprove you'll have to make allowances."

"I shan't be unreasonable. You've had a lot to do, and I daresay it has been hard for you to get away from town."

"It's not easy, when one is really getting one's foot in. But first, about money, you'll have about eleven hundred odd a year. If I may say so, you may count yourself a very lucky man. Dick was to have been married before last Christmas, to Rosey."

"Yes, I heard that," George said. "You wrote to tell me."

"Dick was cut up because you never wrote to congratulate him."

"I didn't get on with Dick, as you know," George said, "and I didn't like Rosey when I saw her last: I daresay she has improved."

"She is a practical, sensible woman, who was to have been our sister-in-law, and has suffered a great loss and disappointment. I hope that you will go over to see her and her mother. They are both overwhelmed; besides, you owe it to them, to have them often here."

"I don't think that I will see them, Nicholas," George said. "They didn't like me in the past and won't like me better now, and I couldn't endure them."

"I am only suggesting what I think people will expect of you in the countryside where I suppose you will pass a good deal of your life."

"Well . . . I will see how I feel, later on."

"That brings me to another point," Nick said. "Dick and Rosey were not at all satisfied with the internal

arrangements here. They were going to have the east wing altered, and the kitchen brought nearer here, and your bedroom turned into a bathroom. They weren't going to start the work till this coming April, when they were going away, but they had the plans made out, and I've got them in the other room. Perhaps you'd like to look at them, and see if you would like to have any of the alterations done."

"I don't want any alterations done."

"No, not at the moment, perhaps; but the house is old-fashioned, according to modern ideas, and you will probably marry; and the alterations suggested are all such as your wife would probably consider necessary. Then, too, if you ever wanted to let, you would get a good let much more easily. They would cost you £700 and it would add all that to the value of the property."

"At present I don't want to touch a stone, thanks."

"Right. I'll rule the alterations out; but I'll keep the plans, in case you should wish to change your mind. You might bear it in mind that Dick would have signed the contract for the alterations on the very day after his accident."

"In that case, of course, the estate must pay the architect for the work actually done."

"That, of course, I have seen to," Nick said. "Of course, Rosey is very fond of hothouse flowers, and those forced things, musk-melons. Dick was making her a nice long hothouse all along the grass there. You'll see it in the morning; it's nearly finished."

"What? All along the grass to the pond, do you mean?"

"Yes. In front of the pond."

"Good heaven," George said. "Good heaven."

"It will be an asset. The house has always wanted one."

"Not there, not there, my child. It will upset the whole view of the pond from the house."

"Rosey didn't like the pond. She thought it made the north of the house damp, or was anyhow damp to look at. Dick was going to drain the pond and pipe the brook into the Yell."

"He didn't do that, I hope?"

"No, he was going to, and Rosey was going to have a sunk garden where the pond is."

"The hothouse is going back where it belongs," George said. "I'm not going to have a glass frame between this and the pond."

"I wouldn't decide till you've had a look at it," Nick said. "A hothouse is an asset to a house like this, and then you'll very likely be marrying and your wife may like one."

"Why on earth couldn't Dick be satisfied with the old glass-house?"

"Possibly he felt that he could do as he liked. Besides the old house was falling to pieces."

"The new one will also fall to pieces from where it is," George answered.

"As you please, of course," Nick said, "I wouldn't decide till you've seen it. It doesn't look quite the eyesore you might think. I got Dick to have in a friend of mine who does these things . . . æsthetically."

There was a moment's silence; then George said, "Do you happen to know whether Dick kept the turf that was taken up when the glass-house was laid down?"

"No, he didn't," Nick said. "Rosey's mother begged it. She was turfing a new croquet lawn at The Laurels."

A sudden fear came into George's mind. "I suppose," he said, "I suppose Dick kept on the peacocks, didn't he?"

"No, he didn't," Nick said. "He probably didn't care about them one way or the other, except that they were noisy before rain. But Rosey said that they would never have a flower in the garden as long as they were there, which of course was true. However, Rosey's mother said that her brother would like them. So Dick handed them on to him. He's got a place in Surrey. He's in the City. The firm has dealings with him. As it happened, it led to some very interesting business for me."

"They can be replaced," George said. "Peacocks aren't very rare."

"Won't that be rather a pity?" Nick said, "to replace them? Rosey took charge here just after the engagement in July, and pushed on a flower-bed on the bank to the pond. She and her mother planted a lot of things that will be up in a month or two."

"They won't," George growled.

"They won't if you have peacocks, certainly. But in this open season they're showing already."

"But that grassy slope to the pond was the best thing in the garden. Both mother and the governor liked it. It will go back straightaway. I'll get some turf experts over from the seedsmen, and have it reset."

"Isn't that just a little cruel to Rosey and her mother?" Nick said. "You see, they were for some months led to suppose that this would be their home. They took a great deal of interest in it, and do still, and always will. They have been here quite a good deal, since Dick's

death, doing little things to the flower-bed. It would be rather like a blow in the face to them to have all that swept aside. Rosey's mother was all for their being married in late September or early October; but Dick had promised Sir Peter to take the hounds till the first of December and wouldn't agree. If he had, he'd have been alive now."

"What brought Dick down at that fence?" George asked.

"Well, poor chap, there'd been rather a bachelor party at the end of the cubbing, with Dick so soon to be married. They broke up late, and were cubbing at Maisemore at ten. You know how it is. He didn't feel like it, so he took a little more to steady him. He oughtn't to have been out. The hunt were most awfully decent about it. I should think quite fifty of them were at the funeral. And now about Dick's horses."

"Go ahead about them: I was going to ask."

"I knew that you would want something to ride," Nick said. "But I didn't feel justified in keeping all Dick's string, especially as we'd such a job to find you. I kept two. You can have a look at them and see what you think. Naturally they haven't had quite enough to do, but they're both pretty hard, and good, made hunters: one's a black called Bug-Jargal, which I rather fancy; the other's a very light chestnut called Kilkenny. Dick had the black two seasons. The Irish horse he bought in October from Colway, who is giving up."

"I'm glad there's something in the stable," George said. "We'll have a look at them first thing in the morning."

"I've got all the papers and accounts in the next room, all ready. They won't take long. We could, perhaps,

get them finished before Church to-morrow. I've had to take rather a lot of time from the firm, but I've been able to bring in some quite nice business to them, so that that will not much matter. As a matter of fact, I think I may say that I'm of some importance in the firm, so that I can do, to a great extent, as I choose. I suppose you'll be wanting some days in town almost at once? I think I can get you some quite nice rooms from a friend of mine who will be going abroad."

"I don't much want to go to town," George said. "I want to hunt."

"Even so . . . and it is a little soon after Dick's death, don't you think? Even so, you'll want proper kit. You can't get breeches that will fit, or a coat with any cut to it, nearer here than town."

"I'll bet I will."

"Then you'll want other things. You can't wear things like that dinner-jacket here in England."

"I'm wearing it here in England."

"Well, of course, if you want to advertise the fact that you're just in from the back blocks, of course I'll say no more."

"I hope you won't," George answered. Nick looked at his finger nails, which were pointed, pink and very well polished. His head was bent down, showing his well-marked and very early baldness, but though the head was down George saw a smile on the rather ugly wide mouth. The Childrey brothers had never agreed: Dick had always been overbearing and bullying; George had always been looked on as the ne'er-do-well; and Nick was the model who got all the prizes: not quite such a model, per-

haps, George thought, for all the outward success. He knew one or two things about Nick which weren't altogether of a kind to endear him to matrons. Yet there was Nick, all smooth and oiled, with his hair plastered down in the way that always made George squirm, patronizing and setting forth the law, as though no other had right to speak. Still, Nick has been very decent in getting things into trim at the Bartons in his absence, and then, this was his first night at home, and his first talk with a relation for over five years.

"I suppose your life suits you awfully well, Nick," he said. "You have a look of enjoying your profession."

"It suits me," Nick said. "I couldn't be happy without an intellectual basis to my life, which my profession, of course, provides. It is the profession, don't you think, pre-eminently, of the clear intelligence? Perhaps you've not met enough of us to be able to say?"

"Come, I've met you," George said.

"The principles involved give one such pleasure," Nick continued. "Quite as much, in a way, as the special exercise of the brain."

"But how do you relax in the evenings when you have had your exercise of the brain? I suppose you do relax?"

"Ah," Nick answered, "I have only in the last year felt that I could relax in the evenings, as you call it. The secret in my profession, as perhaps in every other, is to make oneself indispensable. To do that, one has to apply oneself and lose no chance of either study or actual practice. Latterly, I have found it better for business to go out a good deal among people who can be of use. A man can pick up a lot of business in town by just being agree-

able. In the place where work is done, it is given to the man who is liked. That is self-evident. Then there are the intellectual pleasures that polish the understanding, and meeting the big men of business with their armour off, and of course very good music, for cultivating the ear."

"Oh, yes. I remember you used to sing. So you keep that up?"

"I have been to Bonzoni for a while, who did me the honour to say that he was content, which is high praise from Bonzoni. Of course, I don't sing, in the professional sense: just enough to appreciate good singing when I hear it, and of course to sing something when asked by a hostess after dinner. I happen to have won the entrée into two or three good houses where that is likely to happen. Then latterly, I have been spending my Saturdays and Sundays here, of course, and I've taken the liberty of trying to keep your two horses hard for you by gallops on Trotover. By the way, hounds are at Godsdawn on Wednesday, if you want to hunt."

"I do."

"If you think it's not too soon after Dick——"

"I don't think it's too soon at all. If I'd loved Dick, I wouldn't hunt. I'd go a good deal further than that, perhaps. As it is, I'll hunt."

"Now, I wonder?" Nick said.

"What do you wonder?"

"I must go to town by the early train on Monday: better, perhaps. . . . Could you send me over to Tatchester to-morrow night, so that I could catch the express?"

"Yes. Old Bob probably couldn't take you, but we could get something in the village."

"Thanks. I was wondering if I could get back here on Tuesday night. I think I can without much trouble. Could you put me up on Tuesday night?"

"Of course," George said, "whenever you like."

"Thanks. If I come down, and I think I can, I'd like very much, if you'd allow me, to come out to Godstown with you and introduce you to people. You haven't been in these parts much, really, for seven or eight years. It's rather a new lot. People have dropped out and others come in. I could put you into touch with everybody. It would be quite a good opportunity; that is, if you approve?"

"Thank you," George said. "I'd be very glad. Of course, I'd mount you. We'll look at these two hunters and have one apiece, if that will suit."

"It will suit me very well," Nick said, who had meant to contrive it from the first.

"Come along into the other room," George said. "We'll have coffee there."

He passed along the corridor to the drawing-room at the end. He had not yet been into the room since his return.

It was a big, long room with a badly painted ceiling representing two ladies in a cloud receiving wreaths from two ladies not in cloud. "Rather too stretchy," George had thought them in his childhood; he thought so still, but was glad to see them again. The room was lit by the fire and by a big standard lamp. The heavy red curtains were drawn: the dark pictures made the same dark oblongs against the wall. As of old at this season of the year there was a table at the south window heavily laden with green earthenware bulb bowls, some of them

sprouting shoots. "Hullo," George said, "what's become of all the porcelain that used to be on the mantelpiece?"

"Rosey didn't like it," Nick said. "She said that she couldn't have a room that looked like the year One. So as Dick didn't want it, I persuaded him to let me take it, of course at a valuation."

"Have you got it still?"

"No," Nick said, "I much prefer Oriental myself. In fact I have picked up one or two quite nice pieces. But those Meissen figures I parted with. They are quite old-fashioned and only appeal to the crank. I got rid of them to a German connected in some way with the porcelain works where they were made. He gave me a good price for them, better than I could have got at an auction."

George was sorry that they were gone: he had liked the little shepherdesses and nymphs in their gay colours when he had been a little child. Besides, they had been on that mantelpiece for more than a hundred years, which seemed to give them the right to be there always. Now, instead of them, there stood upon the mantelpiece two photographs in silver frames, one showing Rosey, the other Rosey's mother.

"Tell me about the people here," George said, taking a chair from which the ladies were less visible. "Is that pretty girl Polly married? The one out Tencombe way?"

"Polly Sladd? Yes. Married years ago. A chap in the Foreign Office, or something."

"I heard that Sybil married. Are those two little girls, her sisters, alive?"

"Ruth and Rosemary? They've got their hair up."

"They used to be jolly little children. I suppose I'll see all the local beauty at Church to-morrow."

"Probably. They'll all have heard that you are back, so they'll be there to see."

"Are the Harridews at home? I heard in the train that Lou is engaged to a soldier."

"She is, yes, quite recently."

"Is Jane engaged, Jane Harridew?"

"The grey gander? No, nor likely to be. But I tell you what, George, if you want to see a pretty girl, you look out for Belle Ridden. She was only a child when you were here, but she is growing into a rare beauty. She's very different from Bill and Sal."

"She had need to be," George said, remembering the Ridden parents. "I didn't quite hit it off with them in the old days. But about the Harridews. Young Harridew died or was killed in the far West, I heard. But there used to be a girl called Carrie, with a long neck like a goose: at school when I was home. I thought she'd be good-looking presently."

"People think her so," Nick said. "She's at home now. She'll probably be at Church to-morrow, then you can see her. But if you're looking for beauty, you must see Miss Holyport at Tatchester: great dark eyes and merry; an awfully good sort."

The discussion was interrupted here by Mrs. Baldock, who came in to say, "Mr. Harpit and Mr. Hankerton, Master George."

Before George could rise the two men entered, both dressed for riding and somewhat splashed. Steer was a small, burly man, with a deep booming, musical voice. Mike was bigger and quieter: he gave all the feeling that

he was a nice fellow but good for nothing. "Pleasant to have about as a mascot," his last employer had written, not wishing to be too discouraging.

"We heard at the Arms that you were here," Steer said, "so we decided to call in as we passed. I'd have been at the station, only Nick wasn't sure when you docked."

"It's good to see you again," George said, for Steer was his old familiar friend whom he had not seen for years, though the two had written to each other. "Sit and have some port. Have you been hunting?"

"You can call it that," Steer said. "We've been mucking about in Lordship Wood with the South Combe ever since noon. We're all dined and ported, thanks. We mustn't stay because of the horses. But I had just to call in. Golly, I'm glad to see you, George."

"I'm glad to see you, old man."

"We met Jane Harridew as we were going to the Arms," Mike said. "She was coming here with a note for you, so I said I'd take it for her. I've got it somewhere or other if I haven't dropped it or anything. No, here it is. We could take an answer if it's urgent."

George took the letter. He hadn't seen Jane's handwriting for six or seven years, but there it was again, as unmistakable as Jane's soul, somewhat cramped, tortured and wild, but based on something enduring. "Just let me read this," he said.

The note was not easily legible, though neat.

DEAR GEORGE,— (it ran),

They tell me that you are at home at last. Welcome. If you have nothing better to do, will you come to see us to-morrow afternoon? Don't bother to answer: come.

Yours sincerely,

JANE HARRIDEW.

"There'll be no answer, thanks, Mike," George said. "It's only a note asking me up to-morrow. I'll send the lad with a note in the morning."

"You'll find all your old friends and a lot more at the Harridews," Steer said. "They all come there after Carrie. She's the loveliest young woman since Helen of Troy or thereabouts, and as nice as she is lovely."

"I gathered from Nick that she was good-looking," George said.

"Good-looking? Is that Nick's version of it? Everybody's off his head about her. That chap with the bird's name, who paints the portraits, painted her for last Academy. He told me he'd never seen a lovelier girl. He wanted to paint her as one of these classic ladies, but old Harridew wouldn't let him. It's a jolly good job, a portrait painter's, painting girls like Carrie all the time."

"They don't have such luck, anything like," Mike said. "I knew a painter chap once who told me: they generally only paint dowagers with three chins."

"The dowagers may have three chins," Nick said. "But I never knew a painter paint more than one."

"There's roguery in all trades but ours," Steer said. "But come along, Mike, we must go. So long, Nick. Good-bye, George, old man. I'll see you at the Harridews to-morrow and then we'll arrange something."

George went out with them to see them off; he walked beside their horses to the white gate, which he opened for them. The waning moon had risen to light the drive (more a farm-track than a drive) between the clipped yew hedges (planted well away from the road) which his father had tended with such pride. He felt his old friendship for Steer knit itself up again exactly where it had been broken off, when Steer had gone to sea and he him-

self to the college. The sweetness of home-coming was mixed now with a strange and bewildering sweetness of possession: that all this place was his, by a miracle of fortune. For the first time, there was something stable in his life, a piece of England that had been among his forbears for more than two hundred years.

He stayed for awhile by the white gate listening to the snapping tread of the horses hurrying back to stable out Compton way. It was a fine, mild winter night, likely to turn to rime frost at dawn, enough perhaps to put cats' ice on the poachings near the pool. The owls were abroad all about the avenue: their cry, so long unheard, was beautiful to him. As he stood listening, he heard the triple bark of a vixen from somewhere in the pastures on the other side of the house. Presently, he thought, he would hear the other English cries, the mad cry of the dog-fox, the squeal of rabbits, the stormcock, larks in heaven, lamblings in fold, rooks, blackbirds, chaffinches, the chiff-chaff, the saw-sharpener, woodpeckers drilling and laughing, the cuckoo bringer of spring, the nightingale bringer of summer, the stock-dove murmuring like summer. He walked slowly back to the house, happier than he had ever been in his life. He had had a life of zest and change, not of happiness. Coming near to the house, he saw the end of the glass-house near the pond. "That will start to go on Monday," he thought. Coming into the sitting-room, he found Nick gone. He looked at the two photographs on the mantelpiece: he had most bitterly disliked Rosey and her mother, yet but for an accident they would be there now and himself still riding round America; but for the other accident of Dick not making a will the Bartons would belong now to Rosey. He took the photo-

graphs from the mantel, shut them into a drawer, and then brought from his room and placed in their stead two old tinted photographs or glass negatives of his father and mother in the year of the great Exhibition.

He heard the click of billiard balls in the next room: he found Nick there, practising the shots he fancied.

"Have a hundred, up?" Nick asked.

"I'd cut the cloth," George said, "I haven't touched a cue since I left."

"Time you began again."

"All right, I will begin again," George said, "but you'll have to give me eighty. Wasn't it jolly seeing Steer?"

"A good fellow," Nick said, without conviction. "Isn't it rather a pity that he chucked the sea?"

"He'd enough to live on when his father died."

"Yes, perhaps, but he'll some day want to marry."

"I should think that he's in that state now," George said, "judging by his remarks about Carrie Harridew. You never told me that she was such a wonder."

"Each one to his taste," Nick said. "You'll see her to-morrow, if she's at home. I'm going up to the Harri-dews myself for tea to-morrow."

"Jane Harridew is a good sort," George said.

"The grey gander? Oh, yes."

"I've called her the grey gander myself," George said, "but I'm sorry to think it. She's a fine soul. She gave up her chance so as to nurse her mother, and when her mother died she gave up everything for Lou and Carrie. She won those two everything they've ever had."

"Perhaps," Nick said. "Still, when all is said, one must a little go by the judgment of those best qualified

to judge. The Squire, her father, knows her best, I take it? He hates the very sight of her."

"I don't doubt it," George said. "One must a good deal go by whether those who judge are prejudiced. A man hates to be reminded of things he has done badly. She's like the ghost of Mrs. Harridew to him, I don't doubt. He hated Mrs. Harridew, too, remember. At about the time that I was born, he was away from home with a woman from out by Corselaydead Common. Afterwards, when he had had a child by her, the woman died, so the story goes. He then patched it up with Mrs. Harridew, for the sake of the children. I have thought a good deal of Jane since I've been away. She stands thinking of better than most people here."

"You'll not have many rivals if you want Jane," Nick said. "I take the Squire's side in all that business of the woman. I've seen a lot of him lately in one way or another. It's true he didn't get on with his wife. If she were at all like Jane, as she was according to the portraits, I'm not surprised. Anyhow, it takes two to make a marriage. But apart from all that, he was in the Crimea, and for a while in Parliament. He cuts a good figure on the Bench."

"He was born to a good position and has kept it," George said. "Has he any talent that a man would buy in the open market?"

"Yes," Nick said. "When you're driving, you need a brake: he is a brake."

"What use is a brake when the land's going uphill?"

"That isn't the view we take of the land here," Nick said. "Then he has authority."

"He's an old bear with a sore head," George said.

"Old age tells on most of us," Nick answered. "It makes many people a bit testy. But not many men of over seventy could do what he does in mere endurance. I saw him walk all day early last September, from ten to five, carrying a gun, and he was up cubbing next morning on a young horse."

"I'd undertake to find fifty men of over seventy, labouring men of this parish," George said, "who would plough all day, six to six, and be up at five next morning to a day's threshing."

"To change the subject for a moment," Nick said, "Charles Cothill of Sleins is at home; you'll remember him; and that fellow Vaughan is here."

"He used to be a cheery soul," George said. "Has he married yet?"

"No, his cheeriness doesn't lead him quite in that direction."

"I remember," George said, "he used to carry on with a girl at Tatchester. He sang in the cathedral then. He used to say that he had a master key to the cathedral and used to take her there at night. He said that the clergy sometimes came round with friends to see the cathedral by moonlight, but he was never quite caught. Has he any lady at present?"

"I don't know quite what his private arrangements may be. He sings still, and he can ride. He used to box at one time."

"By the way," George said, "you'll know most of the Tatchester people. Do you know a very queer-looking tall chap, with long hair and a terra-cotta tie?"

"With a velvet coat?"

"Yes, and a great blue stone, like a big brooch, on his tie."

"That's the chap they call Ethelberta," Nick said. "What was he doing?"

"Behaving very oddly. He seemed to be looking for someone. He kept staring into the carriages."

"I've heard of him," Nick said. "He's said to have been in love with Miss Harridew, and as he's not very sane, as well as a good deal of a bounder, the Squire very properly put his foot on him. He's the son of one of the canons: writes about art, and scents his hair."

George reflected that Nick's hair, which was greased or oiled, diffused a faint scent. "It's getting rather late," he said. "What do you say to bed?"

CHAPTER II

THOUGH the arrival had been pleasant, the waking the next morning was still more pleasant, in the peaceful bed of home after the unstable beds of a traveller. George roused at the noises of Sarah raking the kitchen-fire, and the stampings of horses. He missed one welcoming noise, of pigeons ruckling and shifting on the outhouse roof. The pigeons had never failed before. He sprang out of bed to see why the pigeons were not there, but lo! the pigeon-loft was gone. "That will never do," he thought; "the pigeons must go back there. Rosey's fear for the garden, I suppose. But a flight of tumblers in the sun was half the beauty of home."

"What has happened to the pigeons, Nick?" he asked, at breakfast.

"Rosey didn't like them because of the garden," Nick said. "She said they were so destructive. Then her mother didn't like them, because she didn't think them moral and gave ideas to the maids. Dick shot them all except one, which went away, and we had them for pigeon-pie. They're noisy things in the mornings on the roofs."

"I can't live at the Bartons without pigeons," George said. "They are part of the soul of the place."

"You'll easily get some more," Nick said, "old Baldy over by the camp there still breeds them."

After breakfast, George looked at the glass-house on the lawn and decided that it should go at once. Coming back from it, he saw the staff of the Bartons watching him, to see how he looked by daylight. He felt like a king newly come into his own.

He went out to the cow-barton to see the farm-men, old Coulter, Punch, Poppyhead and Frank, all of whom he had known of old. Coulter was an Ancient Briton of a man, with strange theories of the arrangement of people's insides; Punch was a little old pigmy, of some older stock than Ancient Britons; Poppyhead (so called in boyhood during an attack of ringworm) was a fine but somewhat dour Puritan, who sang the Metrical Psalms in a nasal whine:

"The moon by night
Thee shall not smite
Likewise the sun by day-a."

Frank was a delightful boy. George had brought presents for all of them: a gay waistcoat for each man, a hat for Coulter, a muffler for Punch, tobacco for Poppyhead, and a clock for Frank. They had not had many presents in their lives. He made them a little speech and hoped that they might pull together. Old Coulter said, "There wasn't any fear of that, he might be sure, seeing as it was one and all."

"Ah," the others said, "and so it is."

After this, George went with Nick to the stable-yard. Richard and Will were there to welcome them; everything in the yard was as neat as it could be.

There was stabling for seven, but four of the stalls were empty. Bob, the old favourite, was in the loose box at the end. A young bright chestnut general purposes

horse, known as Merry Grig, and the two hunters, Bug-Jargal and Kilkenny, were in the stalls.

"I kept the chestnut for the trap," Nick explained. "Things have to be fetched, and Bob can't be worked more than a certain amount."

"He's not much for looks," George said, giving Merry Grig some sugar. "But he's friendly, and he's certainly strong. And this is the black that you like so. They might have given him a better name."

"It is a literary name," Nick said; "it has a certain fitness, to those who read."

"Nice head," George said, looking at him. "And got some neck on him. He looks as though he could go."

"He can go," Nick said. "And jump, too. Don't you think he's a beautiful horse? What, might I ask, don't you think quite—quite about him?"

George shook his head. "I'll wait till I've tried him," he said. "But he doesn't win me at first sight. He looks to me as though all his goods were in the shop-window."

"They're not, then, let me assure you," Nick said. All this while George had been looking down the line at the beautiful pale head of Kilkenny who was looking at him, perhaps mistaking him for someone known of old. "That's the one I prefer," George said, going towards Kilkenny's stall.

"That's the one Mr. Colway liked, sir," old Richard said. "He said he would never have parted from Kilkenny, sir, if he hadn't had to give up hunting altogether."

"I don't wonder," George said. "He's the horse for me, of the two. Don't you like him, Nick? You've ridden him?"

"Yes, I've ridden him. I've nothing against him: only tastes differ."

"I must just try Kilkenny," George said. "Just have him out, Will. I'd like to take him round the paddock."

"Hugh said he's not everybody's horse."

"He seems good enough for most," George said, liking him better at each moment.

"After the Colonial things—what do you call them—brumbies?—that you've been riding," Nick said, "I dare say he does a little startle; but you'll get back an English standard after a month or two."

George took the reins, mounted, and turned Kilkenny past the barn into the paddock, feeling more drawn to the horse than to any he had ever ridden. "A really good Irish hunter," he thought. "Easy as a cushion and gentle as a lamb, and moves like the wind of May." He went round the paddock twice, feeling more and more happy. "Now, friend Kilkenny," he said, "we'll see what you can do." So he turned from the house to the pasture-bottom, towards the brook that ran from the pond into the Yell. Settling down to ride, he took him at a good pace at the brook, across it like a bird, and away into the pasture as though hounds were ahead. At the pasture-end he went over a cut-and-laid fence into Prick's Piece, where he turned for home as though horse and he were one. Both knew each other now and were agreed. They went back like a bird in the air over fence and water, then trotted back to the yard, with George making much of him and Kilkenny playing with the rein. "Not much amiss there," he said, after the horse had returned to stall. "If the other is as good, Nick, I shall bless your choice."

At Church, as he entered with Nick, there was a general turning of heads to see the new master of Bartons. Later in the service, in the Lessons and during the Sermon, he picked out old faces and guessed at others. The pretty young woman who played the organ was the younger Miss Holyport, sister of the beauty. He could not see the Harridews' pew, owing to the piers of the nave. He saw some familiar faces, and recognized the louder voices of the choir, especially the lady whom they called the Murdered Pig from the power of her upper register: she seemed no weaker through time. After Church, he met old Mrs. Hill (Will's mother) with Ellen, her daughter, who was in service. "Oh, Mr. George," Mrs. Hill said, "I am glad to see you back after all these years; and my husband the same. He'd have come himself to see you, only one of us has to stay with Phœbe. But he said, 'Whatever you do, don't fail to welcome Master George.' "

The charm of this welcome was a little dashed by the muttered remarks of passers: "Who's that, Mother?" "Oh, it's that young Mr. Childrey who's come into the Bartons; he'd no business to have the Bartons really, only that Dick never made a will."

George walked a little way with Mrs. Hill and Ellen. They were now country cottage people, but were of gentle blood. Their forbear, Sir Challoner Hill of Tut-tocks, had wrecked himself for his king in the Civil War: his manor had been sequestered and the house razed. The Hills lived still on the little bit of land that had been spared to them, in a cottage that had once been a chapel. They were the people most skilled in country matters in all that countryside. In hawk-training, cheese-making,

bee-keeping, distilling, cider-making, mead-making, the doctoring of beasts or the care of poultry, they had no peers. George bespoke his tumbler pigeons from them.

As they came out into the broad space of the heart of the village, to the green, where the stock still stood, between the double row of old limes, a gipsy van went by. It was of dark brown, picked out with yellow. It was drawn by a strong brown horse which George thought had something of the Percheron about him. The rear of the van was hung with baskets and withies. At the rear door a young man was bent upon basketwork. A woman was walking by the horse, but as she had passed before George came into the road he only saw her back. She was not dressed as a gipsy: something in her carriage was proud, like the carriage of Spanish women. George looked at her.

"That's Maid Margaret's van," Ellen said.

"Going to Hilcote Winter Fair," her mother said. "She always goes there."

"Is that the girl whom they used to call Mad Margaret?" George asked.

"Yes, Mr. George, that is she. She takes her nephew with her. They make baskets and scrubbing-brushes and dusting-brooms."

George thought of this as he came away. He remembered about Mad or Maid Margaret. She was the unlawful child of Squire Harridew by the woman from out by Corselaydead. He had heard her called Mad Margaret before he left home: "mad," apparently, because she was wilful, masterful and independent; and "maid" because she was of a proud and passionate delicacy and kept men at bay. He wondered at her coming through the village

where she might meet her father; but then she had no great reason to respect her father, none to love him. He thought of her proud, queenly walk beside the horse, and wished that he had seen her face.

"Wait a minute," he said to himself. "I heard that Jane Harridew went to see her and called her sister, and the old man pretty nearly killed her for it. I must go over to Hilcote Fair and have a look at her."

Just before he set out for the Harridews that afternoon, he wanted a piece of string, since he made it a rule always to carry string, a knife and a horse-picker. In looking for a piece he pulled open the drawer into which he had thrust the photographs the night before. The faces of Rosey and her mother pleased him even less by daylight, so he unframed the cards and flung them into the waste-paper basket. He never had been able to abide the ladies; besides, the thought of the murdered pigeons and peacocks made him revengeful. "Besides, there's that beastly glass-house on the lawn," he muttered.

The Manor House had been built under the reign of the Earl of Chatham and added to under the reign of William Pitt, by Harridews who had prospered at those times. It was a comfortable, handsome red-brick building, of two stories, with dormers in the roof above. It faced to the north, on which side it looked like a big farmhouse. The lodge was the cowman's cottage, the drive was a track through cow-pastures. At the back or south was a great flat expanse of grass with shrubberies and ornamental trees, cedars, deodars and thuias.

As George drew near to the gate, he saw Jane Harridew coming towards it from the other direction. As she carried books, he guessed that she had been teaching at Hope

Goneaway Sunday School. She walked erect, with a firm tread. She wore pince-nez glasses. She had a shock or mane of coarse, iron-grey hair, so thick that she wore it cut short, which at that time caused remark. In childhood she had formed a habit of tossing back her head to clear this mane from her eyes; this nervous jerk still remained. There was something mannish about her stride, her costume and her shoes.

"Ah," she said. "How d'you do, George? I suppose home-coming is never an unmixed bliss. It must be a wrench to you, not to find your father. You didn't like your brother Richard, I know. Still, one becomes accustomed to the wrangle and misses it. However, we won't talk of that. I suppose your brother Nicholas has told you all the news."

"He said that Lou is engaged to a soldier."

"Yes, Sandy. I dislike soldiers, their brains are so soon killed by routine, but this one is still young enough to be pleasant."

"I suppose you've been to Sunday School?" he said.

"Yes," she answered, "as usual, fifty Sundays a year: 'pumping undesired water into unretentive sieves.' A good tea and a romp would do us all more good, I think."

"Hope Goneaway used not to be a very bright spot," he said. "The name's against it, I suppose."

"It isn't a bright spot," she said. "The farmers make a bare living and starve the labourers, the labourers drink to drown care and poach to eke out their wages. Then the magistrates send them to jail and the wives have to keep the children. But you'll meet all this quite soon enough for yourself. Out there in the Hope one is back

in the eighteenth century. I come home feeling like Cobbett."

"It's a difficult job, running a world," George said. "To-morrow I begin to run the Bartons. I'm beginning to realize it."

"Be comforted," she said. "You can't make a bigger mess of things than your neighbours are making. Come in, George. You won't find the house altered, except for the worse."

She led the way into a big cold hall flagged with stone, and spread with the worn skins of leopards shot forty years before by the Squire. There were trophies of Crimean arms over the fireless fireplace, and portraits of eighteenth century Harridews on the walls. As George entered, he smelt again, with a gush of memories, the Manor House smell of pot-pourri, furniture polish, pomander, dry-rot, mice, dog and tobacco-smoke. Jane opened a sitting-room door on the left. "Come in, George," she said. "You'll find everybody here."

He went into a long, pleasant room walled with books. Round the fire, in sofas and armchairs, some half-dozen people were sitting, smoking and talking. They rose as the two came in. The day was mild, but the windows were all shut: what with the people, the tobacco and the fire, the room seemed foul.

"Lou," Jane said, "here's George Childrey come home. A window open might prolong your lives, I think. Look after George, will you?—I must go."

George knew most of the people there. Lou, a dumpy and merry young woman, the Squire's second daughter, was an old friend; her lover, "Sandy," a pleasant, happy

fellow with a fine set of teeth, was new to him; young Charles Cothill from the Sleins, a dark lad with keen eyes, who looked as though he had a good deal in him, he had known of old out hunting. Then came Mike Hankerton, who had twiddled his handkerchief into a kind of rabbit and was making it jump up his sleeve by sudden jerks of his fingers; after him there was young Bunny Manor, whom George remembered as a very forbidding type of boy, but who seemed now to be reformed; and lastly there was Vaughan, a big, tall, very black man, with high colour and bright eyes, who somehow always gave the impression of being a cup or two above the normal. He had come to those parts for the hunting in George's last year at home. He remembered George and greeted him cordially. He was a rich and rather wild bachelor, but as he was now at the Manor, George supposed that he, too, was reformed.

When George had been welcomed, Vaughan did not resume his seat but walked to the piano. "Come along, Louey," he said, "let's sing something."

"No, Mr. Vaughan," Louey said. "My father, who was well brought up, disapproves of Sunday singing. I follow in his steps."

"Oh, rats!" Vaughan said. "Don't tell me." With one hand he played the tune of "Up I came with my little lot."

"No," Lou said, "no songs on Sunday here unless my parent has the gout; then we do not sing, we coo."

"Well, coo now."

"My parent is not afflicted."

"Well, let's do something," Vaughan said. "I say, look at all these packs of cards. Here's good furniture for

an anchoress. Come on, everybody, and we'll have a bit of a flutter." He began to move books from a table.

"Cards are not Sunday recreations, Mr. Vaughan," Lou said.

"Oh, rats!" Vaughan said. "A little flutter will do us all good. Hullo, by Jove . . . What's this?" He had picked up a tract from among the books; he read its title aloud.

"THE DEVIL'S PASTEBOARD

A Dialogue between Mrs. Light Thought and Mr.
Good Man upon the Sinfulness of (so-called)
Games at Cards."

"Put it down, Mr. Vaughan," Louey said.

"No, by Jove," Vaughan said. "Not till it's done me good. This is Louey's Sunday reading. Listen to this, everybody. Mr. Good Man is speaking:—

"'I have now said enough, I hope, Mrs. Light Thought, to show you that cards are gewgaws of the Devil and drawers into nether hell.' But Mrs. Light Thought's answer . . . you must hear that as well.

"Mrs. Light Thought:—'Oh, Mr. Good Man, you have indeed enlightened me. I see now, too plainly, whither my taste for pleasure would have hurried me. Henceforth, cards shall to the fire, lest they bring me there; nor will I neglect to tell other triflers what you have declared to me.'

"Louey's cards haven't to the fire, though; they're all here, ready for a flutter. Who wrote this stuff? 'John Catlington, Preacher of the Word.' Why, that's the ranting chap who speaks at Hope Goneaway. I like his cheek, 'Mr. Good Man.' Is Louey one of his flock, 'sitting under him,' I think they call it."

"I have nothing to do with Dissent, Mr. Vaughan," Louey said. "The tract belongs to my elder sister."

"Is she a convert?" Vaughan asked. "I've heard a good deal of this chap lately. The farmers round Hope Goneaway are going to put him in Yell Brook. He unsettles a lot of poor fools who were daft enough already. He's one of these tub-thumpers who preach free-love and hell."

"Is this Mr. Catlington that you're talking of?" Charles Cothill asked. "He's not a tub-thumper: he's a jolly good Christian chap. He's given up everything for it. He'd splendid prospects, both as a scholar and a churchman, but he gave up all. I don't pretend to know him well, but I should call him a very remarkable man. As to unsettling people, I shouldn't think that he does, but if he's not content with Hope Goneaway as it is, he has all my sympathy, I must say."

"By George," Vaughan said, "the devil-dodger has nobbled Cothill, too. But where's the lovely Carrie, Louey?"

"My sister is teaching the Sunday School at Naunton."

"Lord," Vaughan said, "Mr. Good Man has bagged the whole covey. Well, let's do something; let's have Treasury Cricket, the sort they play in the Treasury. You know the sort of thing. They turn up at the office at eleven and roll all the letters and things into balls until twelve. Then they send a commissioner over to challenge the Admiralty; then they play them with the ruler till lunch."

"Yes," Cothill said; "then they hang a notice on the door, '*Back at four,*' and go home. But come along for cricket. Can we have these newspapers for balls, Louey?"

"What you want, really," Mike Hankerton said, "are

a couple of good big champagne corks. You wrap them in paper and then sew them with a packing-needle."

"You'll use nothing but paper in here, Mike," Lou said. "And there are certain rules about cricket in here. Anyone who breaks any china is out; anyone who hits my young man is out; hitting the window is out; chipping those old bookcases is out; waking my parent is out, the whole side out; but that will mean the match being stopped as well."

Vaughan took the ebony ruler from the table. "Centre," he cried. "Now, my little Louey, go on at the gas-works end."

"I'm not your little Louey, young man," she said, "as I've had to tell you twice, and would you were not so deaf. But you're not going to play right-handed. Men bat with the left in the presence of porcelain. Now, play."

The first ball went into the fire for six, the second under the table for five, the third on to the top of a bookcase. The fielders dragged chairs to the bookcase. Vaughan called his runs as he made them. "Seven, eight, nine."

"Call, 'Lost ball,' " Louey said.

"It isn't lost ball," George said. "I can get it. Hand us up a poker or shovel or something; then I can gouge it out, it's jammed. Buck up, Mike, he's running eleven."

"Chuck her in," Lou said. "He's running a hundred. Quick, he's going another."

"Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen," Vaughan cried.

"I think I can gouge it out from here," Bunny said. "There she comes. Now then, George. Out with him."

Chuck her in. Catch, Louey. Now then, put him out. How's that?"

"Not out," Vaughan cried.

"Not out? Of course you were out if a lady says so," Louey said. "And I do say so."

The three men standing on chairs, wiping the dust from their fingers, paused where they stood.

"You were easily out, Vaughan," they said; "you were out by about a yard and a half."

"Out, rats!"

"Not rats at all," Lou said, "not rats at all, young man: put down your bat and go out into the long field. Next man in."

"Mr. Good Man's jolly well not going out for Mrs. Light Thought," Vaughan said. "I'll fight the lot of you with cushions, rather."

There came a little nervous cough from near the door. The three men on their chairs and the other disputing players turned towards it. They saw a pale, gaunt figure in a minister's black coat surveying the scene with some astonishment. They did not know how long he had been there.

"I beg your pardon if I am interrupting any matter of importance," he said. "I was told that Miss Harridew was here."

"How do you do, Mr. Catlington?" Lou said. "Do come in, Mr. Catlington. You want my elder sister, I suppose."

"No; Miss Caroline Harridew."

"She'll be in at any moment now," Lou said. "Meanwhile, let me introduce you all; though some you'll know."

His coming put a chill upon the company: Vaughan

even seemed inclined to be rude. Catlington had a very stern, straight gaze and resolute mouth; his face was without colour, save where it was bluish from shaving. The cricket lapsed at once; the company took their seats about the fire. George reckoned that Catlington was about thirty-five years old. The talk became rather strained. Louey did her best, but had little support from anyone except Cothill and George.

"Could you tell me if Mrs. Bithechurch is any better?" Lou asked.

"Cornelia Bithechurch?" Catlington said. "She is not Mrs. No, she is no better, nor can she be better while she lives in a one-roomed cottage with a drunken man and five small children, whom she will not leave. She counts herself lucky if she receives four shillings a week from the man's wages. He earns fifteen, when he is in work, and drinks the other eleven. There is not much prospect of betterment there."

"I say, where are these people?" Charles Cothill asked.

"In the south of the Hope," Catlington said. "In the parish in the dedication of St. Michael and St. Mary."

"Couldn't I do something?" Charles asked.

"I'd like to do something, too," George said.

"You are pained by unpleasant facts," Mr. Catlington said, "and wish to smear over the unpleasantness with a little easy kindness. Many would not even do that. But kindness, I'm coming to see, is the real bar to progress in this land. By progress I don't mean drains and being able to travel at speed, but the growth of the religious spirit, and the linking it to will and muscle; to the essential man, if I make myself clear."

Mr. Catlington usually made people uncomfortable

when he made himself clear. He did so with this last speech. Vaughan rose from his seat, plucked down his waistcoat, turned his back to the fire, and took up the case.

"When you've got the what-you-may-call-it linked up," he said, "I suppose you'll introduce the guillotine and similar pleasures to those who now entertain you."

"Folly provides her own very efficient bridle for her followers," Catlington replied. There was an instant's pause while Vaughan was groping for the meaning of this remark and for an answer to it; then the door opened, and Louey rose, saying, "Here is my sister, Mr. Catlington."

All rose and turned towards the door: Carrie Harridew stood there for a moment. Then she said: "I can't think how you can endure this room. It's like a smoking concert. Do open the windows there; I'll open this one."

As she caught the sash-pulls and swayed back upon them, George saw her face in a good light, upturned and animated. An instant later, as she stood there in the gush of pure air, she pulled off her hat and gloves, surveying the men and greeting them: a smile to Charles, something cold to Vaughan, a word to Bunny and Mike.

"How d'you do, Carrie?" George said, advancing to her. "I'm George, George Childrey that you used to go birds' nesting with, if you remember?"

"Can I ever forget?" she said. "How are you, George?" "Welcome home."

He looked into the most beautiful face he had ever seen. He neither blenched nor cried, "Ha," like Chaucer's hero, but was stricken to the heart for the first time in his life, so that his breath was taken from him. She was of a graceful figure; she had a pleasant, well-trained voice.

Her hands were well-shaped, the poise of the head made one look again: the face was like none he had ever seen. There was a mass of vivid golden hair above it: the features were regular. The eyes were of a most lovely deep violet: the complexion, colour and texture of the skin were exquisite with youth and health; plainly, she was much in the open air. The mouth was of singular beauty, both at rest and when smiling: within it were splendid white regular teeth which (the dentist said) could crack coconuts. George had romped with Carrie years before, thinking her a jolly girl; now she had grown into this. To one just home from the wilderness, it was overwhelming. He had an instant's bliss, while she looked at him, as he at her, to see what he had grown into; then Charles Cothill somehow had her aside, talking of coming on the morrow with ferrets and nets, to clear the garden of rabbits. Young Manor said that he had a couple of ferrets if they wanted any more. Vaughan said that he, too, could get a man with ferrets, and would come with a gun; all these youths seemed "courting her with odours." Mike said that ferrets were a lot better than virus; that Len Stokes had bought a stuff called Billyboily Virus, which was said to be the stuff they used in Australia. "So Len put some down out at North Warren," Mike said, "and you know all the rabbits who ate it began to bark and started biting the sheep." After this Catlington said his say. He had called to ask Carrie to lend him some Lesson Books: first readers and spelling cards, of which Carrie had some store, having tried an infants' class, till her first enthusiasm grew cold. "I'll look you out the books at once," Carrie said. She went out to find them: the little race to open the door for her

was won by Bunny. George found himself next to Catlington.

"It was sad for you," Catlington was saying, "that you did not see your father before he died. I saw him several times in the week before his death. He seemed then very young for his years, and full of vigorous thought. However, in age, we have lessened resistance to chills. He drove to see a meet of the hounds on a day of treacherous mildness, in the trap, and contracted the chill, of course. You will live at the Bartons, I suppose?"

"I hope so," George said. "And you live out in the Hope? I don't seem to remember any house there."

"I lodge at the Ryemeadows in the keeper's cottage."

"You're out of the world there," George said, "right out in the Hope like that. I don't suppose you could hear a church-bell from there; no, not in any wind."

"I do not think that anyone could," Mr. Catlington said, "nor, if he heard it, would anyone take it as a call to worship."

"It's a pretty hard place, Hope Goneaway," George said, "and the poorest soil. Think of the names of the pastures that won't grow even bramble, only dwarf thorn: Starveall, Ryemeadows where you are, and the valley beyond, Pinch-Belly-Bottom. It must always have been poor. And the Hope is poor woodland: hardly a good tree in it; all the oaks are ailing."

"It was nearly all arable once," Catlington said, "when the soil was ranker, being undrained. Men got bread from it, of a sort."

"Yes," George said, "when you've got to raise food, or die, you can raise a good deal."

"My flock are on that land," Catlington said, "almost

without exception; and how much bread do they raise, and how much do they get, Mr. Childrey?"

"Farming's not a bed of roses for anyone at present," George said. "But, I say, you're trembling. Are you ill?"

"No, no, thanks," Catlington said. "But I was preaching this morning, and that always leaves me overwrought, if the Word is vouchsafed to me in any measure. Your father showed me some Roman tesserae which you once found at the Bartons. Do you still collect those things?"

"No, I collect nothing," George said. "I've been a rolling-stone for some years."

"I asked," Catlington said, "because in a gale last November, when an oak was uprooted at the Far Hope, it laid bare a small Roman pavement which is still there, undisturbed, unless the boys have now discovered it. If you would care to come over at any time, I should be happy to show it to you."

Carrie entered at this moment carrying half a dozen books. "Here are the books, Mr. Catlington," she said, "all that I could find of that standard. And now will you all come to the library for tea?"

The library was a long dark room, made the darker by bays of books, most of them of the eighteenth century. At one end of it was a bright, pleasant recess where Jane and her father sat: Jane at the table, old Harridew standing gloomily with his back to the fire.

Jane had smartened herself up with some long silver chains which glittered on her like steel. She looked very grey and judicial as she welcomed her guests. As George entered the recess he found his brother Nicholas there, seated near the old man.

Harridew was a big man, with a downwards gloomy

look under bushy brows fast whitening. His face was stamped with three things: authority, choler and intolerance. His fits of rage were well known on that side of the county; they were occasional, yet caused it to be said, that all concerned (himself included) would have been happier if they were constant and he in a madhouse.

The smoulder of an old fire was ever in his heart against his dead wife, his dead son and his daughter Jane: those three who had taken sides against him. The storm of his married life had broken his wife and the other woman who had loved him; then he had cursed his son, saying "God blast you." The son had gone to Arizona, and had been stricken by lightning there upon a patch of iron out-crop. Not that the old man minded this any more than a bull might care for the bull-calf which he has horned over a cliff.

He owned a big poor property on which he lost money: his daughters had their mother's money. They kept up appearances under the leadership of Jane, between whom and the old man was deadly everlasting feud, none the less intense from being now usually silent. He had quarrelled with most of the men in those parts, his fellow J.P.s, the hunting and professional men. The women had long ago cut him, for his treatment of his wife in finding consolation at Corselaydead. Not that he minded that in any way: he loathed all women, except his daughter Carrie, whom he worshipped. His daughter Louey he ignored, except when roused, when he called her "that damned dwarf"; however, Louey was now going to be married.

This host received George with something like favour, saying: "Ha, George, my boy; you back?" Cothill only

received a nod, Vaughan a scowl, Catlington a stare. Mike got a growl of "Mike, I think? How did you come over, walk?" Bunny got, "Ah, Mr. Manor, how's your father?"

Jane poured the tea. Old Harridew went on talking to Nick about these wood thieves, who went into coverts to pick up sticks, wrenched young saplings across and hacked off lower limbs with choppers. "If this mealy-mouthed bench would make an example or two," he said, "the mischief would end to-morrow. These fellows have everything done for them, and think they can do everything and have nothing done to them."

However, the young men who ate his cake had something better to do than to listen to the old bear growling. Nick had to do that: the other six had the exquisite Carrie to watch: nothing lovelier was in the seven shires. The six male hearts beat fast as they watched the lovely mouth bite into a sugary cake, and then, with exquisite grace, lick away the happy crumb that lingered on a finger-tip.

"I was reading yesterday of a Persian princess," Charles Cothill said. "She kept a tame gazelle only to lick her fingers when she had been eating honey."

"She must have been a very messy feeder," Carrie said. "Or the gazelle must have starved."

"Not he," Charles said. "He throve, from contact with so much beauty and so much virtue."

"And the mowings of the tennis-courts," Carrie said. "Even so it died. Dear gazelles are sure to die."

"It didn't, then," Charles said. "It was killed. The jealous prince, seeing it lick the pearl-pale fingers denied to him, slew it with his jewelled yataghan."

"So that was the end of him," Carrie said. "The high-mettled licker was sold to the hounds. But she was an anæmic lady to have pearl-pale fingers."

"But people always call fingers that sort of thing," Mike said, "in books and poetry and that sort of thing."

"Yes," Charles said. "Pearls, or lilies, or tapers, or unsalted almonds, whichever they think will please."

Carrie spread abroad the fingers of a beautiful hand. "I should like mine to be called toast-coloured, or bracken-coloured," she said. "All nice and brown from tennis and gardening, 'and being dirty and amused.' "

"It is perfectly true," Charles said. "The peacock glitters and thinks that he is irresistible: all that the peahen thinks is that she wishes he would not scream so before rain."

"That chestnut horse that Old J. wants to sell you," Vaughan said, "has no more mouth than a garden-roller."

"I can't afford him anyhow," Carrie said. "Are you going to be at Godsdown on Wednesday, George?"

"Rather," George said. "Are you?"

"Yes; I and my little mare." Five men swore inwardly that they would be there or thereabout on Wednesday also.

"There's a chap writing in the papers," Mike said, "to say that he can always tell a person's character by the nightmares he dreams. What is your nightmare, Carrie?"

"To be caught by a lion."

"Lions are all right if you treat them properly," Bunny said. "All you've got to do is to rub the tops of their polls and say 'Poor pussy.' "

"I shall carry valerian," Carrie said. "And when they

begin to purr I shall fix them with my Sunday School eye."

"I met a chap in Australia once who said he met a lion and stared it out of countenance," George said.

"He sounds a fairly brazen type," Carrie said. "And the lion fled?"

"Howling, so he said."

"Did he seem an otherwise truthful man?" Carrie said.

"I don't know," George said. "I never really saw him. He came into camp after dark and was gone before I woke. He was very entertaining."

"I should think so," Carrie said. "You'll find few such entertainers here."

"You know, George," Mike said, "you oughtn't to tell that story unless you're very sure of your company."

Old Harridew came gingerly to the table to put down his teacup. "Ha, George," he said again, as though seeing him for the first time. "Your brother Nicholas tells me that three weeks ago you were in the wilderness on the other side of America."

"Yes, I was, Mr. Harridew."

"Quick work," the old man grunted as he went gingerly back to the fire on twingeing feet. "All this modern idea of getting there quickly. And what do they do when they get there, in nine cases out of ten?"

"What do you find the great joy in being back from the wilderness?" Carrie asked. "Sleeping in sheets, or butter for breakfast?"

"Hearing English voices like yours," George said. Carrie blushed.

"It's always a pleasure to hear one's self speak," she said.

"Yes, isn't it?" Charles said. "I met our Member last week. I asked him if he enjoyed the sweets of office. He said that all of them were soon bored by the endless committees and correspondence, but that he never really tired of the sound of his own voice . . . and then to read it next day in the Press."

The party broke up soon afterwards: old Harridew broke it up by saying that his girls had to rest before evening service. The men were plainly unwilling to leave the other fellow behind to speak to Carrie. Jane cleared them away, retaining George for a few moments to show him a picture which he had remembered, of the Harridew pack, 1799, killing their fox, in the late famous hunt, in the grounds of Harridew House, the property of Marmaduke Harridew, Esq. The picture showed the back of the red-brick manor: one horse dead in the field (now the lawn), another, in extremis, at the side, "only saved by a bucket of ale" as the story went: the huntsmen in the midst of the pack about to fling the fox to them. "My father had the brush when he was a young man," Jane said, "but

'The glories of our earthly state
Are shadows, not substantial things.'

the moth got into it and so it came to an end."

Coming back into the hall, George met Carrie, who, as he hoped, had been waiting for him. "George," she said, "will you come over to-morrow at about twelve and stay to lunch?"

"I will, indeed; thank you."

"Come earlier, if you're not too busy."

"I will, indeed," George said; "I'm not going to be busy till I've had a good time."

"That's my motto," she said. "'Eat the wild-oat cake while the digestion's good.'"

"There's nothing like having something to repent, is there?" he said.

"Well, if you come *too* early to-morrow, you may repent," Carrie said; "because we've been making quite new tennis-courts, and want you to help roll."

"I'll roll it all I can," he said, "whenever you like."

After this he walked home in the dark, as deeply in love as a man can be. "And they are all in love with her," he thought, "all the lot of them: even Nick, very likely; and they've all got such a start. Well, I'll start from scratch and beat the lot of them. She can't care for a chap like Vaughan, or an ass like Mike, or a boy like Bunny." Then he remembered that his friend Steer was a competitor, and that every man in the whole wide hunt was probably in love with her. "She is beautiful," he muttered. "Who could have thought that that long-necked tomboy could have grown into this, only since I've been away? One good thing, however; I've got half a dozen snapshots of her, as she was, in the album at home."

So thinking, he reached the stile in the hedge and turned into the footpath that led to the back of the Bartons.

He found that Nick had already started for London, and that Rosey and Rosey's mother had called at about four o'clock, having been driven over in a hired brougham. Old Sarah had asked them to come in, had shown them into the drawing-room, and had given them tea, which they had taken, though they had made no long stay.

"Come to renew the bonds so happily tied round Dick," George thought, writhing at the thought of the glass-

house, the pigeons and the peacocks. He went into the drawing-room with resolve to open the windows for a bit. As he entered the room he thought, "By Jove! they'll have noticed that their photographs aren't on the mantelpiece. If they've looked into the waster-paper basket, I'm done."

Alas! he was done. There was the tea-tray, not yet cleared, on the table near the fire: the two had had a comfortable tea; but beside the tea-tray was the waste-paper basket, from which the photographs had been removed. On the tray was a note written on his note-paper with a pen which bitterness had splintered in a final stroke of rage. The note ran: "We remove the unwanted photographs and take the hint"; beneath it was the savage spluttering line that looked as though drawn by a blunt blade across a throat. "So they take the hint, do they?" he thought. "As long as they take their leave at the same time I don't much care. They'll be a lively couple of she-wolves when next we happen to meet. However, now that we are thinking of photographs, I'll see if I can't find our old photograph albums."

His father had kept these with his other books in a long, narrow room known as the End Room. His father had passed his happiest hours in that room, with his hawks on perches, mewing and whistling, along one wall, his books on the other, with himself in the midst, drawing or writing, planning and experimenting, and the results on the table: the hot red Cheddar cheese, which he called Barton's Best; the apple-brandy; the mead too strong to drink; the home-grown tobacco too strong to smoke (though the country people sought for it as an

emetic); and the pile of rubbings of West Country church brasses. George had not yet been into this room since his return: on going into its darkness and coldness, carrying a candle, it seemed full of his father. Rosey and her mother had not been bothering there.

He lit other candles and searched in the shelves where the albums had usually lain. They were no longer there, though most of the books that he remembered still were there: the Surtees novels; Dickens's books in their monthly numbers; three-volume Trollopes; Youatt on the Horse; Nash's Worcestershire; the Badminton Library, and many books on Farriery, Hawking, Poultry, the Management of Heavy Soils, the English Vintner, etc., not the photograph albums.

He took the lights across the house to a little snugery where his father had sometimes passed his evenings, sipping one or other of the many liqueurs which he made each autumn. Books were sometimes left there for weeks together, he remembered. However, the albums had not been so left. Then it occurred to him that possibly in his last illness his father had wanted to have the albums near him, since they contained records of all his later life. George therefore went up to the room where his father had died and where Dick had since lain; he had not yet entered that room since his return.

There was the bed in which his father had died and his brother had lain dead: a big double bed, covered now with a holland cover. The very handsome lacquer clothespress, brought from the East in the eighteenth century, was there: many books were on the shelves, not the albums.

"Not here, either," George thought; "then they must be downstairs, after all." On looking in the drawing-

room, he found them in a square revolving bookcase, which had no doubt been given to Dick by Rosey (or bought by Dick at Rosey's bidding). It was a kind of gimcrack furniture which George specially disliked: for the moment he forgave it, because it contained the albums. "In these," he thought, "there are something like a dozen snapshots of groups in which Carrie will be. That old governess they had, whom they called Binjy, was always taking groups of us."

But to his great disappointment, all such groups had been removed from the albums, or were not there. There was not one single print of the Harridews, nor of the Manor House. "Was there another album containing them?" he wondered. "Have I got the wrong ones?" He could not be sure, but thought not. "Somebody has weeded them out," he thought, "probably to rearrange them. I'll ask Sarah." Sarah, however, knew nothing. The albums had been in the drawing-room, oh, a long time; she supposed Mr. Dick had brought them down. George didn't think so, because no photograph of either Rosey or her mother had been added, unless, indeed, they had removed them in dudgeon that afternoon. "Nick may know something about them," he thought. "I'll ask him when he comes to hunt on Tuesday."

He supped alone by candle-light, facing the carving of black oak over the fireplace. The carving represented the Prodigal Son, in six scenes, framed as it were between "supporters" of big grotesques, Pans or satyrs, which no doubt Rosey and her mother would soon have had removed as "disgusting." He thought how different the meal would be if the golden-haired, exquisite Carrie were sitting opposite to him. It was a lonely, bachelor meal,

for it was the rule at the Bartons that all the maids should be free to go to Evensong on every Sunday.

After the meal, as he smoked by the fire in the drawing-room, he thought that living alone in the Bartons would soon give a man the creeps. He took a lamp into the billiard-room next door, thinking that he would perhaps practise a few shots. The room was cold, cheerless and struck damp. He could not abide its melancholy, so returned, thinking of Carrie, whom he would see again in about fourteen hours. He thought also about the farm, which he meant to go over as soon as it was light. Carrie's mouth, hair and violet eyes soon drove the farm out of his mind.

Nevertheless, he was up before dawn and was out of the house as soon as it was light. He went over all his estate and examined fields and stock. He could examine buildings and machines later.

He came home to breakfast knowing that his father had neglected the farm for at least five years, and that Dick had left it as he found it. "All the reins have been chucked on the horse's neck," he said. "I never saw such a slackness anywhere: hedges unlaied, ditches blind, drains fouled; all the arable starved out of heart, moss in the pasture, orchards unpruned since God knows when, and the trees as old as Jonah: rabbits everywhere, and the wood pigeons like a cloud. Then the cows are an odd lot, and the pigs are a disgrace. The new broom has a lot to sweep clean, good Lord! and what in the world can be done?"

Steer looked in upon him as he breakfasted; he repeated the question to Steer: "What can be done with the land here?"

"Nothing very much," Steer said. "You'll have a good life and lose a little money, or have it lost for you by politicians."

"I don't see why," George said.

"You will see why," Steer said. "This land is run by the towns in the interests of manufactured goods. Agriculture here is a thing of the past: only the obsolete go in for it."

"I'm not obsolete," George said, "and I'm going in for it."

"You've got private means," Steer said. "It'll be an amusement to you."

"It will not be," he said. "It will be my life's work. I'm sick of amusement. My father might have been a farmer, but kept amusing himself with hawks and stills, and Lord knows what. Then Dick might have been a farmer, but kept amusing himself with the hounds and that creature Rosey and her glass-house. A lot of pretty excuses for being slack, that is what it amounts to."

"Not at all," Steer said. "It amounts to this, that your father and Dick could afford to be pleasantly idle. So can you. You take the goods the gods provide."

"I want to get this farm into most jolly good trim."

"Nothing to stop you doing that," Steer said. "But no need to kill yourself with virtue. For instance, I wouldn't sell those two hunters till you've had a day or two."

"By George, no; that's what I was thinking," George said. "I'm going to have a day or two; and I'll ride the chestnut in the point-to-point."

"That's more the spirit," Steer said. Then after a minute he added, rather bitterly: "And, I suppose, like everybody else, you'll be putting in for Miss Carrie Harridew."

CHAPTER III

LATER in the morning, George walked out to the Manor to roll the court for Carrie. He took with him a little silver trinket which he had bought in Mexico. Outside the Harridews' estate, in the road, he saw Mike lounging about with his dogs: no doubt he was there in the hope of seeing Carrie, although not bidden.

To George's great joy Carrie was alone, looking more beautiful than ever in a gardening rig of big gloves and a man's cast-off shooting-jacket. She was delighted with George's brooch. Having put it on and approved the effect in the glass, she bade George out to roll.

The new court was on the great flat lawn behind the house. "Father said we could have the court," she explained, "if we did not take any of the men from their ordinary work. And I'm planting this bed at the side here with blue laconia. I shall dig while you roll."

For half an hour he rolled the court while she dug. From time to time she passed in her digging to reward him:

"You do roll well, George."

"Yes, don't I?" he said.

"You keep such very straight lines, just as though they'd been ruled. However do you manage it?"

"I've done some ploughing in my time."

"What do you advise against worm-casts, George?"

"I always used to use Wormo," George said.

"Did you ever try Stoke's No-you-don't?"

"No. If you like, when the worms begin, I'll bring along a tin or two and Wormo the court for you."

"Will you really? That is most awfully kind of you."

"There's nothing I like better than Wormo-ing lawns," George said. "And any time you want me to roll I shall be delighted."

"Oh, thank you. And you roll with such tact. Some men take off the whole surface, earth and grass and all."

George heard a dog-cart drive to the stables on the other side of the house.

"I must leave you for a moment," Carrie said. "I expect that is Mr. Cothill. He is coming to lunch here. He may have some plants for me for the bed here."

George cursed the coming of Mr. Cothill, just when he was getting along so nicely and seemed to have the coast clear. But it was Mr. Cothill, who did bring plants. What was worse, he and Carrie heeled them in together, side by side, while George rolled on alone. What was worse still, he heard Carrie pausing in her digging to reward him.

"It is kind of you, Mr. Cothill, to spare me all this blue laconia, and the gregsonia, too; almost my favourite flower." Then, a minute later, George heard:

"You do dig well, Mr. Cothill. And plant well, too; loosening out all the fibres like that and settling surface earth on them."

George had heard that Cothill was a good gardener; in fact, good at all he did and likely to make a name for himself. The one crumb of comfort was that Carrie still called him Mr. Cothill, while he, George, was George. But Cothill was a singularly good-looking man, black and comely, wind-tanned and fine, as well as rich.

Then at lunch, Cothill sat next to Carrie, while he, George, sat next to Louey. He didn't want to talk to Louey, but as Louey was ready to flirt with any man at any time it wasn't so bad, or wouldn't have been, if he hadn't heard the rot that Cothill talked to Carrie. He heard Carrie say, "I always buy my hats by inspiration," and Cothill answered, "That is obvious." Then later on he heard them talking about what would be perfect happiness, and agreeing that it would be swimming in a hot sea, and then roasting on a hot sand. And then he heard Charles say, "But what would make you really happier would be to be in some public place in your very best bib and tucker and to hear the Queen of Sheba, or the Empress Eugénie, or perhaps Madame Rachel, or Sarah, ask of you, 'Who is that most elegant young lady? She is assuredly of a chic.'"

"I'd rather it were a foreign prince," Carrie said. "If I didn't like the lady's hat I should mistrust her judgment."

Then he learned that Charles was going to drive Carrie over to Sleins directly after lunch; at this he could cheerfully have strangled Charles. Even worse followed. He had hoped to be asked to roll the court on the morrow, but was not asked, and had to leave Charles in possession. On starting for home he saw Charles's dog-cart being made ready. "He'll have Carrie beside him all the way there and back," he thought. "And he'll be talking rot all the time."

In the road he saw Bunny Manor walking aimlessly about as Mike had walked in the morning. "He's there, hoping for a glimpse," he thought.

He knew that he himself ought to be at work, examin-

ing the machinery or going over the buildings with a builder, or, at the very least, shooting rabbits. "That will do to-morrow," he thought, "I can think of nothing but Carrie to-day." Thinking of Carrie made him think of her half-sister. "I can see her, at least," he said. He put Merry Grig into the trap and drove over to Hilcote to see the winter fair; after all, he had not seen Hilcote or its fairs for over six years.

He reached Hilcote when the winter sun was in its last half-hour. He put up his horse at the Colway Arms, which smelt of beer and burnt sherry still, as in the past, though the beer smell was now getting the upper hand. He then walked into Hilcote itself, which had once been the quadrangle of a monastery, but was now a little and prosperous town, having this square at its heart, with the Norman abbey to the north of it in use as the parish church.

The square was crowded with the booths of merchants, most of them selling crockery, decorative china, usually pink and gold, or cakes, fruit and hardbake, all three glistening with stickiness. Some booths sold linen shirts and cloth caps. Four shows were busy; a merry-go-round with a steam-organ which played "White Wings"; a smaller merry-go-round, with a steam-organ and cymbals, which played "Cheer, boys, cheer"; a smaller merry-go-round, with a trumpeter and drummer, who played what sounded like selections from "Annie Laurie," and a double stand of swing-boats in full swing with the swingers singing to all three. Further along were rifle saloons, with their noise of spitting, cracking and tingling; Aunt Sally shies, with their men bawling:

"Rollo-bowlo-pitch.

Three shies a penny at your old Aunt Sally,

For a coconut or a good cigar,

For a good cigar or a coconut.

Come rollo-bowlo-pitch."

and the yell of a cheap-jack who stood on a waggon, selling pudding-basins, which he smashed to fragments from time to time when bidding was slack. "Tuppence the basin," he was shouting. "All-English pudding-basin for anybody's beefsteak and kidney-pudding; come, tuppence, or I'll smash it, tuppence, or I smash it. What, you won't pay tuppence? You shan't have it cheaper. The All-English pudding-basin, as used in our Royal Queen Victoria's kitchen at Windsor Palace, Windsor? Who says tuppence? Who says tuppence? Who says tuppence? Well, if you won't then. . . . Smash!" and smash the basin went on the cobble-stones.

It was a holiday in Hilcote and the district near by. The yards of all the inns were full of the traps of farmers: all the square was crowded. In the northern side of the square, close to the church, there was a hiring-stand, where a few men and women hung about still, hoping to be hired: usually these were what were known as the Hilcote Hard Bargains, who had not been able to get along with those who had hired them there at Michaelmas. George had a look at them.

Further along the same pavement, there were booths (as there had been for three hundred and fifty years) for the sale of country things and country skill. A man sat there mending china, using the dancing-ball drill of Ancient Egypt, and sometimes inviting his watchers to try if they could work it. A woman, a little further

along, mended rush-bottom or straw-bottom chairs while the owners waited. A turner sold the wooden cups and plates which he had made: these were still used by the very poor, though cheap tin had marred the market for them. Near him two women offered lace, once much made thereabouts, now falling out of life as fingers and eyesight failed among the makers. Another woman sold the old original Hilcote pies, being the boat of St. Nicholas in gingerbread, stuffed with currants and spice. When George reached this part of the square the shows were lighting their flares and the women at the booths their lanterns, so that a warm light, as well as the glow of sunset, fell upon flowers and faces. He moved along the line of booths until he was stricken by the sight of a woman's face. "Why, it's Carrie," he muttered. Then he saw that the woman was not Carrie but strangely like her and strangely beautiful, as she bent over the light, closing her lantern door. A sharp, unpleasant-looking girl sat beside her, watching George with malice and interest. The booth contained besoms, scrubbing-brushes, horse-brushes and whisking-brooms, that had been made at home and well made. Not many were upon the stall: indeed the market side of the fair was almost over. The woman was undoubtedly Squire Harridew's daughter by the woman from Corselaydead. She was Carrie's half-sister, and nearly as like as a twin.

She had put the lantern upon the table and had picked up her knitting before she noticed George. He advanced towards her, raised his hat, and asked if he might try one of the little scrubbing-brushes.

"Certainly, Mr. Childrey," she said. She handed one to him.

"Will you tell me how you know me?" he asked.

"How do you know me?" she asked. "Yet you do, don't you?"

"Yes," he said, "I do." She smiled: most people knew Maid Margaret.

"You don't remember meeting me?" she asked.

"No, I'm afraid I don't. I'd like two of these little scrubbers, please; and will you let me feel the horse-brush? Are these all your own make?"

"Everything here," she said.

"When did I ever meet you?" he asked.

"Fourteen years ago this coming August."

He searched his memory, but could not remember. "I'm sorry," he said, "I can't remember."

"No harm done," she said.

She did not seem disposed for more talk. She rolled up his purchase in a piece of clean brown paper and tied it with a strip of bast. All the time, the sharp, unhealthy-looking child beside her was staring at George with malice and interest, neglecting her work, which was the making of a bast mat. George paid the sum asked: it was eighteen pence less than it could have been in any shop. The woman was strangely like Carrie, though older and sterner looking: she had the same exquisite mouth and teeth; and the eyes were set in the head in the same way: the brows were better marked and the hair darker. He noticed these things while she rummaged in an old leathern bag for his change. She was plainly Carrie's half-sister, whom life had put to making hard brushes and selling them at Hilcote Fair, while Carrie drove to Sleins with a handsome young man.

"And another shilling makes the ten," Maid Margaret said, giving him the change.

"Thank you," he said. He lifted his hat to her and

turned away quickly, but not so quickly as to escape the remark of the sharp-eyed girl, who said, "We're very polite, aren't we? I hate that man."

"Ah, you mustn't hate, Annie; nothing but evil can come of hate," Maid Margaret answered.

George wandered down through the crowd in the dusk and noise and the light of the flares. He was at home again in the heart of England, among the men with gaitered legs and horse-girth belts, among shepherds, among the dumpy, good-tempered (or often sharp-tempered) wives and mothers, who roared with laughter at very broad jokes, and told little Willy to look at the pretty swing-boats, ducky.

He was going through the archway to the Court House when he caught sight of his old little labourer Punch, who had asked leave to attend the fair. "D'evenin', Master George," Punch said. "A tidy fair, this one: some tidy pigs, too. And I've drawed the turkey in the raffle. I've put in for him fifty-one year and got nothing, and this is the fifty-second; and he's all of nineteen pound, that's tidy for a turkey; and they give a pound of sausage in." At this the little man crossed himself, and said: "It won't do to boast, though, will it?" He was a strange little old trembly man, with a face of wrinkly parchment. He was good (as George knew) at all country work, but specially good at hedging and dry-walling. He had a roll in his walk, having been horned in the leg as a lad by a weaning cow. His nose was almost level with his cheeks, having been flattened in.

"Why do they call you Punch?" George asked. "Were you a fighter?"

"No, no, sir," Punch said, "I never could abide fighters.

You be going by my nose. Mother did that with the flat-iron. No, sir, I was called Punch because I went about with a Punch and blawed the pipes to en; ah, with old Mr. Dixon, in the Punch and Judy. But Mr. Dixon got into trouble. I don't know who was to blame, there was three of them in it: between 'em they murdered Mr. Jackson out in the road by White Ladies; that would be a long way from here. They cut him across the throat and took his bag full of gold, and put him in a ditch. And they'd a got away, only you see, the man went to the ditch and found en. So Mr. Dixon was hanged with the other two: Barney, they called one, ah! and Squeeze-the-cat the other—a yellow man: they was all three hanged.

“Mr. Dixon had got into betting ways, not at the race-meetings, he never went to them, but to the fights. They'd a many fights then, all on the grass, with the bare fists; not as 'tis now. When they put Mr. Jackson into the ditch, it was nine o'clock at night, and it was a good ditch full of water and brambled over. He might not a been seen there in a hundred year. But the owner of the field was a Mr. Jones, who made horse-mixture. And that very next morning early, he dreamed a dream, 'Thy ditch is all bloody,' he dreamed, and then he saw his ditch all full of dead men. So as soon as it was light he said, 'Something terrible's gone with that ditch in the long pasture: I've dreamed dreams of it.' So out he went, and saw where people had been, and the water was all muddy, so he just poked with his stick, and there was Mr. Jackson. It was Barney and Squeeze-the-cat were the worst, but Mr. Dixon was with them: they made no difference then. They had me to the court, but I couldn't tell any-

thing. I was in the stable of an inn there, living with the dogs: we'd two dog Tobys, for the old one was getting past it. They put up a big gallows at White Ladies so as to be big enough for the three, and they all came out and made speeches and prayed for the King, and said that it was drinking done it, to bring them where they were. Mr. Dixon saw me, and he called out, 'You look after Toby, Jack'; so I said I would; but they told me afterwards that the dogs were all owed, because of the expenses. I took up with another Punch after that, Mr. Mildman; and when we had our show broken up by the gipsies we made puppets, but the gipsies broke them, too. There were some very rough sets on the road then, they stuck at nothing. There was often a man or two maimed for life at the May fairs. They'd fight like raging mad, with stakes and bottles and all sorts. I was in it because I knew no different, but when I got to be a bit older I got out of it and went into the farming way. But they knew I'd been on the roads and that: they've never called me anything but Punch, though it's gone sixty year since I did any."

Outside the Court House, a little stuggy man, who had been drinking something with cloves in it, caught George's arm and pointed through the Court House windows at the lighted Magistrates' Court within. "There," he said, "you see that young man over the other side of old Mr. Flagon, as they call him? Well, that young man, his name is George, and the bold young blood has upped and sold me a bastard."

George didn't quite know what was meant, so he said, "Oh, I shouldn't have thought that, to look at him."

"No," the little man said, "many wouldn't have

thought that, and I wouldn't have; but he did though. Ah, and he wasn't the first he's sold it to the same way; but I've had him there; and he's promised to marry her, and as soon as my girl's case is over, what is on now, the same sort of case; if you understand me, we're all going out to have a drop of something. Perhaps you'll join us? There's nothing like drinking on a bargain, is there?"

As George was a good shot, he paused at the shooting-booths, to shoot at the glittering balls tossing in the air. He won a china dog, two shells, and three pink vases, each bearing a portrait of the Queen. He gave them to the children near the booth.

As he was coming away from the shooting-booth he caught sight of Maid Margaret in front of him. She and the girl Annie were coming from a house where they had been having tea. Annie was walking in a way that betokened deadly sickness; Maid Margaret's arm was round her: the child's head was swaying about. Suddenly, as George watched, the child wrenched herself away and fell forward on the pavement. "Poor child, she's in a fit," he said. He ran to her and picked her up, and was shocked at her lightness. Maid Margaret tended her skilfully. "Oh, Mr. Childrey, thank you," she said. "I ought never to have brought her; it's been too much for her. She is subject to these attacks, poor child."

"Can I drive her anywhere?" he asked.

"No, thank you, Mr. Childrey," she said, "I'll carry her to the van, it's quite near; I'll get her home to bed."

"Let me carry her," he said. "You lead the way." He held the poor little girl in his arms in spite of her struggles; he followed Maid Margaret across the square to

where the van stood waiting. The basket-maker was in the van arranging something, and singing:

"O sweet shall be my wakening,
On Jordan's blissful shore."

The Percheron horse was finishing his nose-bag.

"Just come and help, Tom," Maid Margaret called. "Annie is ill again." Tom thrust away the trestles which he was stowing and opened the door. He was a nice-looking boy of about eighteen, with untidy hair and very bright eyes. "We must have another light," he said; he struck a match and lit a couple of night-lights.

"Get out the quilt, Tom," Maid Margaret said. "We'll lay her on the floor." She and Tom arranged this together, then George clambered up and handed the child to her. It was like handing to Carrie, but Carrie would not have been so practised as this woman in protecting care.

"Can I fetch a doctor?" George asked.

"No, thank you, Mr. Childrey," Maid Margaret said; "it is only one of her attacks. No doctor can help so much as to get her safely to her home."

"Could I drive her?" George said. "If I brought a fly from the 'Arms it would be quicker than this."

"No, thank you, Mr. Childrey; it would only frighten her. She's coming more to herself now. I shall drive quietly, and Tom will sing to her; that will soothe her. I'll start now. Now we shall soon be at home, Annie, darling," she said, bending again to the child. "Shut your eyes, my sweet, and Tom will sing 'The White-Flowered Thorn.'"

She caressed the child's head. As she bent over her,

Tom lit another lantern, so that George saw the inside of the van more clearly: green curtains drawn across a bunks, cups hanging from hooks, and half a dozen books on a shelf. As George saw the curtains move in the draught he suddenly felt that he had seen all this before: someone lying on a bed, Carrie bent over it, and curtain-rings clinking. Surely he had seen it all before, and it had meant something. He stood away from the door to let Maid Margaret come down. He noticed the name on the van-plate: "Thomas Clench, The Bince, Corselaydead."

"Miss Clench," he said, "is there anything that I could bring the child?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Childrey," she said. "Quiet is the only gift that can do her any good." She took off the nose-bag and hung it to its hook. Taking the reins, she turned the horse out of the square. George helped to clear a passage for her. She nodded to him. "Thank you for your help," she said. He heard the voice of Tom, inside the van, crooning, rather than singing, "The White-Flowered Thorn," as the van swayed away out of Hilcote and up the hill towards the woods. "She is like Carrie," he thought, "only Carrie is porcelain and this is earthenware. I must ride out and have a look at the Bince: I'd like to see her again. They're a queer three to go about together: A heavenly twin, the crab and the lion."

She was so like Carrie that he watched the van passing up the hill as long as its tail lantern showed. "If that had been Carrie, we wouldn't have parted so," he said. "I'd have gone on with her, walking by the horse. And now, good Lord! I've left that parcel of brushes at the shooting-booth. I must go back for it."

The hard-mouthed gipsy lady who ran the booth, and now had the parcel (which she had examined) in the box on which she sat, was sympathetic. "Now ain't that too bad," she said. "I thought you'd a parcel by you when you come in, but the lady said it was hers—the lady that come in with the gentleman; but they've been gone a long time: a dark lady, with a red hat and rather a turned-up nose, what came in with the toff and eye-glass."

As he drove home he thought of the two half-sisters, but most of Carrie. He felt that he would have a note from Carrie the next day, asking him to come to roll; in any case, he would see her at Godsdawn on Wednesday, and perhaps ride home with her. At the Bartons, he found that the builders had started to dismantle the glass-house, which was all to the good. There were many problems of the farm for him to think out: Carrie's image, or rather the want of Carrie, always kept him from thinking of them. "I'll get to work and settle all that presently," he thought. "At present, Carrie's the only thing that matters two straws: all the rest can go hang."

He had a restless night, as these lovers do; he was up an hour before dawn, having thought of something that might please her. He went out into the half-light and down the brook to a rushy bog, where snipe came in frost and little snipe nested. In that place, three or four men digging for a few days could make a swimming-pond, with walled sides and concreted bottom. Since Carrie loved swimming she could swim there, while the slope above could be terraced for fruit, with strawberries on the banks. There was no note from Carrie, asking him

to come to roll: a post-card from Nick said that he would be down in time for dinner that evening; a note from Steer said that he would look in for tea.

Steer did not look in for tea, however; he did not come till half-past six. "I'm sorry if I'm a bit late," he said. "I'd have been here sooner only I was at the Manor, rolling the new tennis-courts for Carrie: I stayed on rolling till it was tea-time; and then it was too late to come away; so I stayed to tea there." He had an unhappy look in his eyes, not usual with him.

"A new court needs a lot of rolling," George said.

"That's the trouble," Steer answered. "It does; and those girls at the Manor, without any mother, only that old Barney's bull of a da, they're at the mercy, really, of any male bounder who offers to come to roll. They roll in at every tide; half the bounders in the county."

"Who were there with you?" George asked.

"That young pup, Bunny Manor, and others. The fact is, Carrie is a very, very beautiful woman, and very young, and doesn't quite understand the effect she makes on men."

"I daresay not," George said, hoping that she understood her effect upon himself.

"A girl like that," Steer went on, "ought to have a decent father, or at least a brother. You know, a girl like that, George, makes a man realize what a beast he's been: you know what I mean. You know, you can't get away from it, George, men, single men, bachelor fellows, are a damned bawdy lot. A week or two ago I'd have said 'A good job that they are'; but I don't say it now, by George."

"It would be a eunuchy sort of a world if they weren't," George said. "Anyhow, it's too big a job for one to alter. You'd much better leave it as it is."

"Oh, it's all right for you to mock," Steer said, "you've never felt what a woman can be. I never did until a week or two ago. I know the exact day and minute. But, by George, now that I do, my life is going to be different."

"I hope you'll come and do a bit of rabbiting from time to time," George said, "however much different your life is going to be."

"I'll rabbit," Steer said, "with the greatest pleasure, and I'll hunt. It's swearing and looseness that I'm going to be different in. By the way, your brother Nicholas was up there, making himself very agreeable. He's the only man round here who can get along with the old man. He's the old man's man of business now, isn't he, now that old Thunderguts is out of it?"

"He does a good deal for him," George said.

"If I may say so without offence," Steer said, "it's always been a marvel to me that a chap like you could have a brother like that. But I suppose he's a very good lawyer."

"He must be that," George said, "or he wouldn't be where he is."

"He's got a lot to say for himself," Steer said. "I suppose that's how he gets along. They always say that a woman likes a chap who has a lot of small talk."

"I daresay," George said, "they like rarities just as much as we do."

"Yes, but not for every day. At least, I should hope not." Steer rose, went to the window, put out his hand to the night, and returned to the fireplace.

"It's not going to turn to frost," he said. "We'll have a good day on the Godsdawn to-morrow. The old man's going to drive Nick. Are you mounting Nick?"

"Yes."

"Look here, George," Steer said uncomfortably, "we've been friends a long time, and I'm saying beastly things about your brother. Will you tell me, straight out, if there's anything between your brother Nick and Carrie?"

"Nick and Carrie," George said. "Good Lord, man, no! How could there be?"

"Well, I'm glad to hear that tone of voice," Steer said. "You see, things happen when they have the opportunity. He's been there a lot ever since Dick was killed. And you know, George, Nick has no right to make up to Carrie, or to any other decent girl; you know why, so there's no need for any more."

"Put it out of your head, man," George said. "Nick won't marry anyone who hasn't pots of money and isn't a town bird like himself."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," Steer said. "I've not been much drawn to your brother at any time, as you know. Now that I'm in love with Carrie, the sight of him near her makes me long to punch his head."

"He'll be here directly," George said. "He's staying the night, as you know."

"He won't be here directly," Steer said. "He's dining at the Manor, having business with the old man. He asked me to tell you not to wait dinner. He'll be sitting next to Carrie making plans for to-morrow."

"He'll be sitting next to Jane," George said; "Jane has plans, too, I don't doubt, where either of her sisters is concerned."

"I can't go on like this," Steer said. "I'm jolly well going to take the bull by the horns and try my luck."

"That's the spirit. What do you plan to do?"

"I mean to pop," Steer said. "I don't suppose I've got a chance, though."

"No man knows till he tries."

"I suppose that's true," Steer said. "But I don't suppose she'll have me. I'm not a reading man, I'm not a society man, and I've not got a profession now. They say women always like a man to have something to do to keep him from mucking about the house all day. Then, even if she'll have me, there's the old man: he won't exactly approve of me, for we had that row about my grandfather's tomb when they restored the church."

"All rot," George said. "If Carrie cares for you, she'll take you, whether you've got position, or money, or brains, or not. If she'll have you she'll make the old man have you, whether you fought about your grandfather's tomb or didn't."

"We didn't, if it comes to that," Steer said. "They shifted all the tombs a bit and got a lot of them mixed when they restored the church: not the tombs exactly, the memorials on the walls. They put my grandfather's memorial down where you couldn't read it, and his grandfather's where mine used to be. Of course I wasn't going to stand that: my grandfather wrote a book, a jolly sensible book, about improving agriculture; his beastly grandfather probably couldn't even read. However, we did patch that up."

"He evidently doesn't mind your going to the Manor," George said, "so put both grandfathers out of court. As

a matter of fact, *his* grandfather was the member who feathered the family nest."

"He might bring in that point against me," Steer said. "The Harridews are old Norman stock. Their name is the old war-cry Harri or Haro, or something, and Dieu, which means God. They've been here ever since the Conquest, on the same estate. We Harpits are only yeomen, who got a bit of Harpits Abbey at the Dissolution. His family is a cool four hundred years older than mine."

"Love's a pretty hot thing," George said, "and a lot of cool ancestors don't much affect it."

"Then you think I've got a chance, old man?"

"Practically every man marries," George said.

"Yes," Steer went on, blind as love to his friend's uneasiness. "But you've seen what Carrie is, George. There's not another like her in the seven shires. She's the most beautiful girl anyone here has ever seen. And everybody's after her. I could name you nine straight-away."

"You've either got an equal chance, or a better," George said. "Either you'll be one of nine, or the tenth."

"It's something to have it put like that," Steer said. "I am most awfully glad to have had this talk with you, old man; it's cheered me up a lot. But what do you think about popping?"

"You mean proposing?"

"Yes, popping. I don't know how a chap ever can summon up the pluck."

"She'll go half-way for you, if she wants you," George said.

"Yes, but even so, I don't think I can do it without a good stiff couple of brandies."

"I wouldn't advise you to go drunk," George said. "If you're speechless from love a woman might like it, but if from drink she'll scream."

"I'll do it out hunting, then," Steer said: "if I get a chance to-morrow, at a check, or while we're drawing a second fox. When one is hot and excited from a skurry one doesn't care what one does."

"You'll find most of the ten out to-morrow, won't you?" George said.

"Some of them will be there, no doubt," Steer said. "But I don't suppose any other of them will be resolved to pop. I may be the only one, as far as that's concerned."

"I hope you may be."

"By the way," Steer said. "There's been a bit of a fracas at the Manor, but it is to be kept hushed up, and Carrie isn't to know of it. You probably never met the chap called Ethelberta?"

"Son of one of the Canons, with a big blue brooch in his tie?"

"That's the chap; one of these Arty chaps; no harm in him, but got more butter than crumpet."

"I saw him at Tatchester," George said. "He struck me as being a bit odd. And Nick told me something about him. I gather that he was one of your nine. What has he been doing?"

"He's in love with Carrie," Steer said, "and the silly ass keeps sending her poems and waiting in the road for her, and drawing pictures of her holding lilies. The

old man asked him to keep away, oh, a couple of months ago; he did, for a time, but he turned up again yesterday. So Jane has complained to the Canon, and Ethelberta is to be packed off to Greece with a tutor. They haven't told the old man everything, because he might do something violent."

"He probably would," George said. "Carrie's the apple of his eye, and an old rogue bull is apt to horn intruders."

"The fact is," Steer said, "the fact is, I'm sorry for Ethelberta: there's no harm in him; he knows quite a lot about canaries, and writes for a thing called the *Canary Times*. Then he's quite a decent walker. But you see, George, it's very easy for a chap who's not in love to laugh at a chap who is; all the same, love's no joke; it makes me keep a pretty tight hold of myself, I can tell you. I would not go so far as writing poems, perhaps; but not far off it. It's made me do things pretty nearly as bad. For instance . . ."

However, he could not bring himself to tell the depth of his folly; he looked at it inwardly, then rose, saying, "Well, it's been a relief to tell you all this, old man. I'll see you to-morrow at the meet."

"You'd better spend to-morrow night here," George said. "If you finish anywhere on this side the country."

"I'll put in to let you know my luck, anyway," Steer said, "if I have any luck. If I haven't, I feel like chucking everything and going back to sea. The sea doesn't let you down like they say love does. You know what to expect from the sea."

The next morning Nick appeared at breakfast, tailored

to the throat and oiled above; he was straddling in an apron to guard his snowy cords. "You're a frightful swell, Nick," George said.

"I don't want to appear quite like a Tony Lumpkin, naturally," Nick said, with an eye on George's rat-catcher. "Nowadays you judge a man by his appearance."

"So the Harridews are driving you?" George said.

"Yes, they've room for me; only Carrie and the old man will be out."

"I suppose we shall meet during the day," George said. "But if not you'll be here to-night."

"Right," Nick said. "And now I'll toddle off to the gate, for I don't want to keep them waiting."

Nick had been gone perhaps five minutes, when George, sitting in an upper window for the glimpse of Carrie passing, saw the man Poppyhead come running from the stables to the back door. Then there were rushings to and fro, as though something alarming had happened: Mrs. Baldock, with a brandy bottle, hurrying back to the stable with Poppyhead, while Sarah bustled about downstairs; then Polly came running to him. "Oh, Mr. George," she said, "old Richard's had a fall in the stable and can't speak."

George slid down the banisters into the hall and ran to the stables, where he found old Richard on the floor in the harness-room, with his head propped upon a saddle. He was very white and frightened-looking, but was smelling at a bottle of salts held to his nose by Mrs. Baldock, while old Coulter, growling in his un-Christian way, was trying to uncork the brandy bottle with his teeth.

"Why, Richard," George said, "what's all this? What's happened?"

Richard rolled his weak eyes and tried to smile. "We don't know what's happened," Punch said. "But up he went and down he come, like Man in the Bible."

"You do go, get out of here, Punch," Mrs. Baldock said. "There's too many here as it is."

"How about bones?" George asked. The arms and legs seemed to be unbroken: still, old Richard was old, when ribs and thigh-bones are brittle: besides the shock of any fall at his age might be serious. "How did this happen, Frank?" George asked.

"He left his knife in the loft, sir," Frank said, "when he cut the new truss this morning; so just as he was ready to start, he said 'I mustn't go without my knife,' so he goes up to get it, and down he slipped on the steps, from seven steps up."

"You go into the house, Coulter," George said, "and get the mattress out of my father's long chair. Give me that bottle: I've got a corkscrew. We'll slip the mattress under him. Give me that bottle."

"I've got him done now, sir," Coulter said. "You don't need any corkscrew for brandy bottles. I bit off what stuck out, and poked in what was left, and he pours lovely."

To prove it, he poured some into his hand and licked it off, then held the neck of the bottle to old Richard's lips. "Go, get the mattress," George said, taking the bottle. "Where's the mixing spoon?" He took the horn spoon from the window-sill and gave old Richard a dram. The old man came to himself a little, gulped, smiled a little, complained of cold, and said that he would soon

be all right. In a minute they slid the thin chair-mattress under him without causing him much pain; they brought him blankets and a quilt. Polly came running with a stone hot bottle which they put to the old man's stockinged feet: old Coulter brought the warming-pan. "If he kept this on his stomach," old Coulter said, "it would draw out whatever's in, sure to, for that's where the poison gets—the upper belly."

"If you touch his upper belly, Coulter," George said, "with that red-hot pan you'll kill him. Mrs. Baldock, you look after him, will you? I'll take the trap to the surgery and bring back Dr. Frome. Mind, Coulter, I'll skin you if you do him any harm."

"All right, sir," old Coulter said, grinning. As George went to the trap he heard old Coulter beginning an anatomical discourse. "There's two bellies in every man," he was saying. "There's the hither belly and the nether belly, but no man can stand 'em both working at once. Very well, then. . . ." Of course, as soon as he heard the trap going off at a fast trot to the surgery, old Coulter applied the pan to the patient, who had some comfort of it.

George found young Frome at the surgery, finishing off his morning's cases by dressing a chaff-cutter's hand. "Right, George," he said. "I'll come along in a minute. I haven't seen you for some time. Take a seat in my father's room, will you? Or, no, wait a minute, you can help me bandage Bert here, who's been shoving his hand down a chaff-cutter and chopping off his fingers. Now, don't you yell, Bert; this won't hurt, and if you don't yell I'll give you my new sixpence."

George helped in the dressing, which Bert, a lad of

sixteen, bore with much courage, so as to touch his sixpence at the end. When Bert had gone, Frome washed his hands under the dispensary tap. "My guv'nor's gone hunting," he said. "I suppose you were going too?"

"I was."

"You'll still have time, after we've looked at your chap. You'll run into them, with luck. It's good to see you back. Hold on a minute, till I get a bottle. Look here, I'll let you into a trade secret. You see these bottles here. All these bottles with red seal are bowel mixture; if ever you want cough mixture, that's green seal. Those blue seals are something between the two, a sort of general easer; but none of them can do you any harm. I'll bring your chap a red and blue: men generally need both before they're done."

They found old Richard in a good deal of distress, lest he should have broken his liver. "For my father's brother," he said, "my uncle, who used to work for old Mr. Colway, out at Bishop's Purley, he fell from a ladder, as he was gathering pears from the south wall, and broke his liver. He did not know it at the time, mark you; it was later that it came upon him."

"Your liver's as sound as a bell," young Frome said. "Many gentlemen in this county would give a thousand pounds for a liver as good, but you've broken three ribs, and will have to take things quietly for a bit."

They rigged up a stretcher out of a straw hurdle from the paddock. On this they carried old Richard to his cottage, which lay just outside the white gate. Here, where he had lived alone for many years, they put him to bed: his sister, Mrs. Abendon, the wife of the baker, who lived at the other end of the village, was by this

time there to look after him: half a dozen gossip-hunters and several children below the school age watched his passage with awe. "Why, it's poor old Mr. Richard: they do say he's broken all his liver and ribs, so that the doctor can't tell which is which." In another hour this had been improved upon: "He fell out of the loft with his open knife in his hand and ripped out all of his insides."

"Poor old chap," young Frome said to George. "I expect he'll be all right; but a fall at his age is a serious thing: you can see he's a bit scared and shaken. I'll look in on him this evening; then I'll call, if I may, and let you know how he's doing."

"Thanks," George said. "If there's anything he can fancy or that can do him good, you let me know."

"How about your hunt?" Frome asked. "I'm afraid that that's rather knocked on the head."

"I'll go out and get my horse and have a ride, at least," George said. "Come along, Frank, jump up, you'll have to drive me out to the 'Cheddesdon Arms' and drop Dr. Frome at the surgery."

"You won't find them at Godsdowndown," Frome said. "Some ruffian has put poison down, and they're afraid for the hounds. They'll be on towards Eastwater. If you're lucky you'll find them." They dropped Dr. Frome at the surgery, then turned into the lonely lane for Godsdowndown.

Frank flicked the whip over Merry Grig's withers without touching him, so that the young chestnut went up to his collar with his ears straining forward: the trap scattered the puddles right and left. In the lonely lane, occasional pheasants, routing near the track, which had been laid by the Romans, went up with a whirr.

"Will you be thinking to ride, sir," Frank asked, "in the point-to-point races?"

"I hope to ride Kilkenny," George said. "Who taught you to drive, Frank?"

"Mr. Richard, sir, when I was a boy."

"You seem very fond of horses."

"I was out at Tencombe, sir, in old Mr. Manor's stable, before my father died; then mother had to move here to Mr. Davis's, and then I came to work at the Bartons."

"And work with horses is what you like? I must see what we can do. A man ought to do what he does best."

The sun came out so that all the land became suddenly glorious: they were out now in the downland, going straight for the gap below the rampart on Beaten Hill.

"That's where King Arthur beat the heathen," George said, nodding towards the hill.

"It was more on the other side, sir," Frank said; "in the combe the other side, that the battle was. They say they always fight it again on Midsummer Night: and my grandfather (they do say) came right in among them one midsummer and saw them all fighting with axes all along on the top."

At the "Cheddesdon Arms," where the meet had been, all trace of the hunt was now gone, except a groom settling himself into a trap, and a maid collecting glasses from the benches.

"Where are hounds?" George called.

"Gone on over the hill, sir."

"Is Mr. Childrey's horse here?"

"The horses are all gone on, sir."

The landlord came out to greet him. "You're welcome home, Mr. Childrey," he said. "It was a glad hour to me

when I heard of your return, sir. But you're half an hour late, sir. They've gone on to Eastwater; they'll be away by this."

"But where are my man and the horse?"

"They've gone on, too, sir. Your brother said that since you were late the lad had better take on to the 'Tod and Tickler.' You'll find them both there, sir; but the hounds will be away, sure to, from Eastwater: they've more foxes than pheasants in Eastwater."

"If he went the short cut to the 'Tod,'" one of the men said, "he might catch a glimpse of them."

"But with the wind as it is," said another, "he'll only see 'em going away; that is, if you ask me."

"Which is the short cut to the 'Tod?'" George asked.

The landlord pointed it out. "It'll be a bit rutty," he said, "but you can get through, and it'll bring you out just above the 'Tod.'"

George thanked him, and turned up the trackway, beside which old thorn-trees, battered by centuries of wind, stood bowed like the men of the past. The larks were singing: George blessed them for it. He did not bless his brother Nick. "I'll bet any money," he muttered, "that Nick has told Will to go on after hounds, so that he can have Kilkenny as a second horse. Put him along, Frank."

Frank put Merry Crig along. They saw an elderly farmer in bottle green, riding a grey cob downhill from them, out of hail, intent on something below.

"Mr. Tuttocks, of Tuttocks Court, sir," Frank said. "That's his grey cob and his green coat."

"Pull up just a second," George said; "I think I hear a halloa."

Frank pulled up the horse, who did not want to stop, having caught, perhaps, some hint of the excitement in the unseen horses far ahead. From far down the hill beyond the woods someone was halloaing. "That's not a hunt servant," George said; "put him along again."

About a quarter of a mile down the hill a farm team was slowly forging forward. When it reached the turn, the boy and ploughman (the man in a blue shirt) scrambled up the balk to stare down the hill.

"Looks as though they aren't away yet," George said.

A little further on they found a woodman stacking logs ready for carting. "Seen anything of hounds?" George called.

"They'm gone away down," the man said, "gone on down to Eastwater. There's more fox than fish in Eastwater."

A quarter of a mile beyond the woodman they came to a little red-brick house, bearing the date, 1635, on a stone label over the door. It bore the sign of the "Tod and Tickler," the Tod being a badger and the Tickler a hedgehog, both common beasts in that wild place. A young farmer on a powerful, ill-bred horse was drinking a mug of beer at the door; between gulps he made love to the girl who waited for the mug.

"Is Mr. Childrey's horse here?" George called.

"The horse?" the girl asked.

"Yes, for Mr. Childrey?" The girl looked lost; she turned to the farmer. "What does the gentleman say?" she asked.

"Mr. Childrey's horse. Is Mr. Childrey's horse here?" the farmer repeated.

"What horse would that be?" the girl asked. "I don't

have anything to do with the horses; only the beer. Mr. Davis don't let anyone touch the horses except himself."

At that instant, in a stillness, upon a flaw of wind wavering in that nook of the hill, there came from far below a few notes of the huntsman's horn which made the farmer fling down his beer with an oath. Merry Grig, who knew what the sound meant, cocked up his ears and began to tread upon his toes. The horn sounded again, mixed this time with the cry of a pack that has found and is on together, in sight of the fox. Three notes of the horn followed. The wind flaw died out, or changed, no further message came. The hounds were plainly away towards the valley. "That settles that," George said. The farmer was already hurrying downhill on the grass by the side of the road. Merry Grig seemed bent on following him. George cursed his luck. "Yes," he said, "he's taken on Kilkenny for his second horse. Drive on down, Frank. We'll turn off to the right, and perhaps hear of them."

He was conscious that someone was halloaing. "Someone a callin' 'ee," the inn girl said.

Looking back, uphill, he saw Will riding Kilkenny towards him.

"Why weren't you at the Arms, Will?" George asked.

"Please, sir, when you were late, Mr. Nicholas told me to leave word and then come on here."

"But why weren't you here? Where on earth have you been?"

"Please, sir, I don't know these parts, and I took the wrong lane."

"What were you going to do if I didn't come here?" George asked.

"Mr. Nicholas said I was to make straight for Kill-down House coverts, for he'd be pretty sure to be by there, and then I could take the black home, sir."

"Another time, when I tell you to be at a place you'd better be there," George said, as he mounted Kilkenny. "You have made a nice mess of it between you. Get along home now, and if Dr. Frome wants anything fetched for Richard you'll go into Tatchester and fetch it."

He turned downhill at once, and the devil went out of his blood as the joy of the ride came in. After all, he might well fall in with hounds, if the luck would turn. Carrie would be there, surrounded by all the bloods of the hunt, with poor Steer "popping" at the first check; still, even so, he might, with luck, ride home with her; might even find her dismounted, lost or hurt, and rescue her: "'tis but fortune, all is fortune."

He had never known that side of the country well. It was a land of spinnies and little brooks; the spinnies dark from yew and holly, the brooks of the clearest hill water, all shining, and the larks singing. He met a trap containing ladies. He asked them where hounds had gone; one of them, whose face seemed familiar from meets long before, said that they had gone off to Killdown. George thanked them and cantered on by the way they pointed, longing to come up with Nick and show him that he wasn't to have Kilkenny. But he did not know the way. He got into a land of little apple-orchards where nobody seemed to know the way to anywhere, except to pubs of which he had never heard.

"Killdown?" they said musingly. "Be that out 'Stag and Anchor' way?" "No," another would say, "the

gentleman means out by 'Coach and Horses.' " "No," another would say, "he've told 'ee wrong; it be out past the 'Huntsman,' 't'other side of 'Fox and Crow.' " "Maybe," another said, "your best plan would be to go on to the 'Waggoner'; it won't be above two mile. It'd be about there, as I've heard my father say. But those are foreign parts to us out here."

He had given up hope of seeing anything of hounds, when, on coming round a bend from between the tall hedges of a lane, he found himself suddenly in a familiar place, stamped on his memory by the excitement of a long-past hunt. There in front of him, just across a field, was a big barrow, topped by trees and surrounded by a ditch; it was known as Chubb's How. In the field beside it, a beaten fox, making for his earth in a ditch, had been pulled down at the paling a full eight years before. George had been up, and so had Carrie, upon her pony. They had seen the fox rolled over only fifteen feet from his point in that very corner, near the same pales. Then all the hunt had come up, mucky, sweaty and splashed; there had been a lot of yelling, and Carrie had had the brush and been blooded. She was then a long-necked giggling girl, though rather a pet of his, and he remembered clearly how her eyes had gleamed as the huntsman dabbed on the blood, and how she had borrowed his handkerchief to scrub it off. That was the place; now the long-necked girl had become a swan.

As he now knew where he was he set a course for Kill-down, when his horse suddenly whinnied at a familiar figure, a man in scarlet, muddy to the eyes, riding slowly towards them. Man and horse had been down in some more than usually mucky place; and the man's hat was

smashed in. George knew the man to be Hugh Colway.

"Who is this riding my old horse?" Colway asked. "Why, Kilkenny boy . . . good boy. You're Mr. Childrey?"

"Yes," George said. "Can you tell me where hounds are?"

"I'm afraid I can't," Colway said. "I haven't been near them lately."

"I hope you're not hurt?"

"No. Only we got into a ditch just beyond Herb of Grace. How d'you like my old horse?"

"I love him."

"Nice of him to remember me," Colway said. "I'm giving up, or I'd never have parted with him."

"Do you know where hounds were heading for?" George asked.

"Killdown main earths, I should say."

"I'm not likely to see them, I suppose," George said.

"No. I'm afraid you're not. You're just back from somewhere or other, aren't you?" Colway asked, "a colony or somewhere?"

"Yes."

"Why, you're the man whose groom was killed this morning, by falling from a loft."

"Not killed; only hurt.. How on earth did you know about him?"

"I heard some chap mention it at the meet."

"If I'm not to see hounds, I think I'll turn for home," George said, "to see how he's getting on. Which is my best way from here? I don't know these parts very well."

"You're just about a mile from Coln St. Evelyn

Church," Colway said. "I'll ride with you as far as that and set you on your way."

They rode together, talking of the day's hunt as far as Colway knew of it, how the pretty Miss Harridew had been at the meet, and how they had gone on to Eastwater and killed a ringing fox in the covert, and had then got on to a traveller, to a good quick burst. At the crossways Colway pointed out and described George's way. "Of course," Colway said, "when you get into the Hope you must remember to bear to the right, and that will bring you out somewhere about Corselaydead."

"Corselaydead?" George said. "I have been there, long ago; it's out of my country. Isn't there a place called the Bince there?"

"Yes, a very pretty place, where old Harridew's hushed-up daughter lives: Mad Margaret, they call her."

"Oh, yes," George said, "I've seen Maid Margaret. Who are the people she goes about with, in the van?"

"Her mother's sister's children: nephew and niece, I suppose you'd call them. The nephew draws animals. I told him he ought to be at an art-school, but he sticks by his sister, who's got something wrong with her. Maid Margaret has brought them both up. It must be pretty rough on her to see her father pass her in the street."

"Surely he doesn't."

"Oh, yes, he does. Jane's the only Harridew who ever goes near her. The old bull got rather into a tangle at one time and doesn't like to be reminded of it. Are you sure you won't change your mind and come in for lunch or something?"

"Quite, thanks," George said. "I've a long way to go."

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE cantered off along the track till it ended in the pastures, then rode the pastures till he reached a forlorn great wood with many yew-trees in it. He knew that this must be a part of the Hope.

As he rode into the wood by the timber waggon track he heard the sound of a rabbit kicking in a wire and saw three men, one carrying a sack. They were plainly poachers, for they ran away from him, and looked back as they ran to see if he were pursuing.

He bore on till he came out on a high-lying wild, which was familiar to him from some vivid moments out hunting, though he was not very sure where it was. In an oak-tree beside him a red squirrel suddenly frisked out to jabber at him; half a dozen little birds started jabbering at the squirrel; an owl in the covert hooted at them. Presently he came into a cart-track deep sunk between hills of woodland in which many big beeches grew. "This is a jolly spot," he thought, "I'd like to live out here in the wood. I believe this must be the place they call the Bince. Very likely I'll see Maid Margaret."

There are places of mystery and sanctity which move the heart to awe; this was one of them. He came suddenly upon a deep natural gully with grassy banks (and age-old thorns at the head). In this gully, an abundant spring of water gushed up as clear as glass from the limestone, and sped away over stone and cresses into a stanked

channel that had once made a millhead. No more exquisite place could be imagined. Already, by some blessing of the place, one little budding primrose showed there, which George blessed because it was the first seen by him for all those years.

At a little distance from the gully, down the stream, was an old house which had once been the mill. As at many mills, the leats of water went round the house, so that it stood upon an island. Poultry were on the grass beyond the house, with moorhens cocking about among them; white fantail pigeons were on the roof, often slipping down the tiles on their pretty pink feet.

George dismounted, walked to the house and knocked at the door. As he neared the house, he heard a muffled hammering noise, which ceased before he knocked. No one answered his knock: the door was open, he heard the clock tick, and saw a contented cat's forepaw stretched out in a yawn. As he had no answer he knocked again.

This time there came the sound of someone hurriedly putting down tools; Maid Margaret appeared at the door.

They greeted each other. "I didn't know that you lived here, Miss Clench," George said; "I came to ask my way to the Naunton Road. Is the little girl, your niece, better?"

"Thank you," Maid Margaret said, "she's keeping quiet still; her attacks leave her very weak."

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said. "And I suppose there is nothing that can be done?"

"No, nothing, except to cheer her, between the attacks."

"Would she care for books?" he asked. "I have a lot of children's books, with pictures."

"I'm afraid she might destroy them," she said, "she destroys books so."

"That wouldn't matter."

"If they are picture-books," she said, "I would be glad of them for Tom, who is always drawing pictures for books."

"I'll bring them over, then," he said, "or send them. Might I see your nephew's drawings?"

"Yes, certainly; will you come in, Mr. Childrey?"

She led the way into the house, into the room where the clock ticked. The house looked older from within: it was, plainly, very old: age had blackened the wood-work; the tile flooring was worn into grooves by the treading of generations.

On the window-ledge there were bowls containing hyacinth bulbs. A big tabby cat with one ear was curled in a basket by the fire upon a mat of sheep's fleece: he grinned at George and settled deeper to his sleep.

"Take a chair, Mr. Childrey," Maid Margaret said. "I'll fetch Tom from his work-room."

While she was gone George sat at the table, looking about the room. All the furniture was old; none of it later than 1750. There were many books in the book-shelf, nearly all of them published before 1830. There were also two vivid eighteenth century pastels, of a boy in a red coat, and a girl in a blue dress. Two photographs on the mantelpiece seemed likely to be Maid Margaret's mother and aunt.

Maid Margaret returned with Tom, who carried two sketch-books. He looked much younger by daylight.

"Now, Tom," she said, "you show Mr. Childrey your drawings."

"These are the ones I've been doing lately," Tom said, "I'm afraid I only draw animals."

"Quite enough for one life," George said. He opened the first book, which was filled with sketches of animals: the stags in Sir Edward's park; deer with their fawns; horses of all kinds, usually in sudden movement, shying, jibbing, bucking or playing; many foxes, badgers, rabbits and weasels, all done with the hand of power, and swift imagination. "I don't know anything about art, and I don't know anybody who does," George said. "But I should think these are jolly good; they are so alive. How old are you?"

"Nearly seventeen," Tom said.

"Have you ever learned to draw?"

"I had a lesson once a week, on Mondays," Tom said, "when I went to Tatchester Grammar School, but it was what they call commercial drawing."

"Are you going to be an artist?" George asked. Tom blushed.

"It is what he would like," Maid Margaret said, "isn't it, Tom? I don't know anyone who can give him the right guidance, so I am thinking of taking him to London, to Sir Edward Burne-Jones, who is a painter and a good man."

"I should think any painter would be delighted to advise him," George said. "What's in the other book?"

"Sketches of birds, in water-colour," Maid Margaret said.

"I'm glad he does birds, too," George said. "I'm fond of birds." On the whole he liked the birds better than

the animals. He kept turning back to a drawing of wild swans in flight. "I like this," he said. "I've seen swans at home; they're just like this. You'll have to look out, Miss Clench. A whole lot of people will try to bag these and give Tom nothing for them. I wish I could think of somebody here who could advise. There was a sort of a chap, but he's just had to go to Greece. I'm jolly glad to have seen these drawings. I don't know anything about it, but they're all alive, which must be the main thing. But I must not keep you waiting longer, nor my horse for that matter. Would you show me the way to the Naunton Road?"

She walked with him to the gate where Kilkenny was tethered. She had the walk of a queen. Tom followed, mutely adoring his admirer. "Look here, Tom," George said, "would you sell me that sketch of the swans for half-a-guinea?"

"No, Mr. Childrey, I'd like to give it to you."

"Give it be blowed," George said. "I want to be able to say 'I bought his first picture.' I'll send you a cheque to-night."

"That is the way," Maid Margaret said, pointing. "Follow the path to the church. It's a little less than a mile; the Naunton Road crosses the end of the churchyard."

"Thank you," he said. "You live out of the world here, with no other house in sight."

"Yes, it is quiet here," she said.

"By the way," he said, as he gathered the reins of his uneasy horse, "I lost those brushes of yours. Could I have some more?"

"Yes," she said, "I'll leave them the day after to-morrow."

"Do tell me, when did I meet you?" he asked.

"Fourteen years ago this coming August," she replied.

From upstairs there came a feeble crying of "Aunt Madge, Aunt Madge."

"That is my niece calling me," Maid Margaret said. "I must go, Mr. Childrey. Thank you for your kindness to Tom."

"Thank you," he said. "I'll send the books for the little girl, and I hope she'll be better soon." Kilkenny was not going to wait for any more dalliance, but plunged away.

Before he entered the wood, George looked back at the lonely house among the waters; it was a beautiful place and the girl was very like Carrie. He thought of Maid Margaret's mother and old Harridew, and wondered how that love had happened; and what beauty the old man must have had a generation before. "They both get their looks from him," he thought, "both Carrie and this woman. And that young nephew of hers is a genius. By the way, Carrie will know of a painter from that chap who wanted to paint her. But I'll have to go rather carefully, and not let her know that it's for her half-sister's nephew. A half-nephew of hers, I suppose he is, in a kind of tangled way. What relation would he be?"

CHAPTER V

HE found old Richard sleeping fitfully. "He has been sleeping a little, on and off," the niece said. "We suppose it's the best thing that can be; for him to sleep." George supposed that it was. He didn't feel easy about old Richard. Somehow the sleep did not seem of a restful kind. He went home to his cellar and routed out a bottle of port. "This can't do him any harm," he said, "and may do him great good. Give him a glass or two at meals, if he can fancy it. And let me know at once if there's anything that he can fancy; then I'll send to Tatchester for it."

At about tea-time Steer came in, wet through, plastered and caked with drying mud, his hat destroyed, and his horse stubbed, having been down in Maen Brook, near Herb of Grace. George gave him a bath and a change of clothes.

"I've had a damned day," Steer said. "I've stubbed my horse and my girl won't have me. I'm going to the Colonies."

"Come along; have some tea."

"I will, if I can lace it," Steer said. He took his laced tea to his immediate comfort. "That's better," he said. "But I'll never speak to Carrie again as long as I live. She isn't the girl I took her for. I won't mention her again, either. I daresay a chap does look a silly ass when popping. After all, even if he does look a silly ass, he's

offering the girl all he's got, forever. I defy any man to pop, moreover, just as though he were saying 'Dammit!' Still, she needn't have . . ." Here he stopped; what she need not have done was not betrayed. He stood with his back to the fire glowering at some memory that was bitter to him.

"If you don't mind, George," he said at length, "I'll be off before your brother Nicholas arrives. She went off with him later in the morning. I don't know that I exactly want to meet him."

Some time after he had gone, when George had begun his dinner, Nick came home.

"You had a run, I hear," George said.

"Yes," Nick said, "on the whole you may call it that."

"I heard that you chopped a fox in covert, and then went away for Killdown with a traveller."

"Yes," Nick said, "that is a correct prosaic description." He was plainly bursting with triumph of some sort: George was not going to play into his hands by asking more at the moment.

"I say," he said, "why did you send on Will with the horse to the Tod and Tickler this morning?"

"All in the way of hounds," Nick said. "I left word, so that there could be no possible doubt."

"Will didn't know the way to the Tod. I as nearly as possible missed him altogether."

"I don't see how he could have missed his way," Nick said. "I made it as clear as print to him. By the way, what made you late? Somebody said that old Richard was killed; I hope that that's not true."

"He's had a bad fall and broken three ribs. I'm not very easy about him."

"He can't last long, in any case," Nick said. "Poor old chap, I daresay it would be just as well if he went off quickly from a shock, instead of breaking up slowly. After all, his work is done. You can't pretend that what he does is worth what you pay him."

"He's a part of the life here," George said. "He's been here longer than we have, by a good many years."

"That's true of a lot of obsolete things," Nick said. "In town we learn how to fling outworn things on to the scrap-heap."

"Richard isn't a thing, but a man, and a loyal old friend."

"I was speaking metaphorically," Nick said; "why take me *au pied de la lettre*?"

"All right; have some more port."

"I hold no brief for Richard; nor for any other of these country people," Nick said. "They are the sediment at the bottom. All the active and fluid parts of the population are gone into the towns, or into the Colonies. The life of England now is in the towns; that is where the leaves and the fruit are. This country, like the rest of the country, is the ground which produces only pignuts, shall we say, and fossils like old Richard."

"Well, whatever leaves may be in the towns," George said, "they aren't green, so far as I've seen; nor is the fruit native. If you think that satisfactory, I don't."

Nick spread his fingers and looked at the tips of his nails; he had very well-shaped hands, of which he was vain.

"When certain things *are*," Nick said, "by economic forces and social tendencies working in one direction for a hundred years or more, a wise man accepts them as the

milieu of his time. They are his time; the setting of his stage. I suppose you will admit that man has to play his part on the stage?"

"Why?" George asked. "Many men are scene-shifters, and setters of new scenes. What about them?"

"Oh, of course," Nick said. "If you don't want to play a part, you'd better stand aside to make way for those who do."

Later in the evening, while they were drinking coffee by the fire, George asked if there had been many people out.

"No," Nick said, "not many. There never are many at a Godsdawn meet."

"Who were there?"

"Not many that you would know," Nick said. "Between you and me, you know, it's rather a pity you couldn't have been in time this morning. I could have introduced you to some quite nice people. Do you remember a Miss Swifte?"

"No."

"You might do worse than make up to Miss Swifte."

"Were the Harridews out?" George asked.

"The old man and Carrie."

"Did the black carry you all right?"

"I was coming to that presently," Nick said. "You probably don't know Eastwater Wood; it would have been rather far for you in the old days."

"I do know Eastwater Wood," George said.

"Yes, perhaps you've been there, of course," Nick answered. "But you can't know it well, and haven't been there recently. Now I do know it well, for I've been a good deal with the Eastwaters, shooting and danc-

ing, or whatever was doing: so when the fox was away I was almost the only man with hounds. I *was* the only man except Robin Dawe. We went away into the grass: the quickest mile I've ever gone, I think. But, of course, if you don't know the country it isn't much good my describing it."

"I know it fairly well to Maen Farm," George said.

"He was headed there by some ditchers," Nick said, "but he got back to his point for Killdown. A good many got into trouble at the brook at Herb of Grace, but I knew better than to try it. There's never much scent on those grass fields, but things brightened up as soon as we were off them. We went across the battlefield and up to Pick's Patch: one of the prettiest hunts I've seen for many a long day, if not *the* prettiest. And I was in the first flight, my boy, for all that four miles, till we checked on the road to Pilton and let the outsiders in."

"Who were up at the check," George asked, "besides yourself?"

"Oh, three or four who had hung on to me, seeing that I knew my mind: Sir Peter, a thrusting chap from the Shires, and Lady Jo, and young What's-his-name. The heart was out of it, after the check, for about a mile; then things livened up about the Three-Legged Man till we carried him to Killdown House covert. As there was no lying for him there they went on for the down; but I pulled up, for there were signals of distress, and I'd a pretty far cry to jog home. They must have been near their fox when I left them."

"What did you do afterwards?" George asked. "You didn't take all the afternoon to shog home from Killdown?"

"No," Nick said, "Sir Edward and Lady Jo asked me in to lunch at Killdown House, so naturally I went. They do themselves well. You may not have met him: he was Governor of Ste. Jeanne's in the West Indies. He keeps great state, with only negro servants. After lunch he showed me his collection of hard woods, and his other collection, of manuscripts relating to the West Indies. There was a devilish pretty girl there, staying with Lady Jo, a great linguist, who writes books."

"Good for her," George growled.

"I've worked myself in to be by way of being Lady Jo's legal adviser," Nick continued; "so I see a good deal of them in one way or another. I daresay if I were to give you a letter to them, they would do something for you, if you should be inclined that way."

George had had as full a dose as he could stand of his brother's patronage: but at this moment Sarah announced young Dr. Frome.

"Ah," the doctor said, "I promised I'd come in to see you to-night. I can't stay long; I've got a case out at Tencombe."

"I'll clear out and get to bed, if you'll excuse me," Nick said. "I've had a hard day and must be off to town by the early train. Many thanks for the hunt, George, old man." George noticed that the doctor's eyes were bent on Nick, and that Nick was uneasy under the gaze.

After he had gone, young Frome said, "I had another look at old Richard as I came along. His lung is all right; he's fairly easy and is having a good deal of sleep. I should say that he's going along all right. At the same

time, old age is a complication. You never can tell what harm a shock like a fall is going to do, to a chap as old as old Richard."

"I hope he'll pull through," George said. "I oughtn't to have let him go up those loft steps."

"You can't keep out Destiny," Frome said. "If it isn't the loft steps, it's the orange peel on the flag, or the ice on the puddle, or the greasy bit on the road. There comes the slip and everything follows. However, I think he may do. I hear that your brother has been making strong running to-day."

"Out hunting? Yes, I gather so."

"I didn't mean after hounds," Frome said, "but after Miss Harridew."

"He didn't mention that," George said, remembering Steer's bitterness at the words, "she went off with him later in the morning." It struck him as odd that Nick had never mentioned Carrie, except to say that she had been out.

"Mike Hankerton told me that he was with her all day," Frome said. "They got well away together and had all the best of the fun: everybody else blanketed. I met them jogging home; they were turning in to the Manor for tea."

"He never told me," George said. "Of course there was no reason why he should."

"She's an exceedingly pretty girl, Miss Carrie Harridew," Frome said, "and a nice girl."

"She is indeed," George said.

"Look here, Childrey," young Frome said, speaking very earnestly, "would you come with me to this case out at Tencombe? You'll be back by midnight."

"Yes, certainly. What is the case?"

"A chap's got a twisted gut. But I want to speak to you, if you don't mind."

They drove off together in the windless, clear winter night, too full of moonlight for many stars, behind the doctor's horse, who didn't much want to go. "I'm jolly glad of company on a night call," Frome said, "these downlands are lonely places."

"A pretty tough lot out at Tencombe, aren't they?" George said, "I shouldn't think they would call you for much."

"They're tough in themselves," the doctor said, "but gin and sin rather complicate things. They fill themselves up with Hollands and go playing the fool, and then a stallion goes for them, or the bull horns them, or they get mixed up in chaff-cutters and put cart-grease off the hubs into the cuts, or sheep-dip, or fasting spittle, which is a remedy they swear by. Then they fall off ladders and ricks and waggons. And they get rheumatism a lot, from 'sleeping rough,' as they call it, when they're too drunk to walk home at nights. Of course, they have the pure air. That's about the only pure thing they have."

As they passed Puxley Wood they heard, not far from them, the reports of two guns: there was something odd in the reports, they had a muffled sound. "Did you hear that?" young Frome asked. "Those are the two poachers, Brasso and Pimply. They poach all this side of the country, with a sort of walking-stick gun they have and very small charges, which stun the birds."

"They're moving with the times," George said. "When I was last here Brasso used a catapult with bullets."

The horse moved out of the shadow of the wood into

the wide expanse of fenceless fields which made the floor from which the downs sprang.

"What I want to talk to you about," Frome said, "is not so easy to put into words. You may think it a confounded liberty. If you'll let me be just absolutely frank with you, I'll take what damns you care to sling afterwards."

"Go ahead," George said, "I suppose it's something about my brother Nick."

"Yes," Frome said, "it is. You may know that I don't hit it off with your brother—I never did."

"You didn't seem very cordial just now."

"I'm not. I suppose you've been to the Manor, and have seen the sort of beauty Miss Harridew has become? Well, I have, too, with the usual result. I won't go into all that. She wouldn't have me, and I've stopped seeing her; but I haven't stopped feeling." His voice showed that he had not.

"Do you suppose," he went on, "that your brother Nick is making love to her?"

"Nick?" George said, "my brother Nick? Good Lord, no! If he ever makes love at all it will be to someone with a lot more money and a lot more social pull."

"Love," Frome said, "a lot of love is just jolly well greed. Your brother Nick is pretty well equipped with that."

"We all are, if it comes to that."

"Your brother Nick is. He sees her: he's got eyes: and he is always at the Manor."

"He does a great deal of business for the Squire," George said. "When he is here he has to be there a great deal."

"And you think he's not making love to her?"

"I should think it most unlikely," George said. "They're as poor as Job, and will be poorer when the old man dies. The house is falling to pieces, Louey says; and the old man is not a very attractive father-in-law. Nick is out for wealth and social success."

"A beauty like Miss Harridew would be social success enough."

"Even if he were to sacrifice his ambitions," George said, "even if he were to propose, do you think for one moment that she would look at him?"

"Why not? She is young and merry and beautiful. Suppose that she has ambitions, to get away from a falling house and a bankrupt property and a savage old bear of a father, into wealth and movement where she can be a queen. Give the devil his due. Nick's able and clever and may go far. That is the point I come to. Suppose that he proposes and she accepts. You know about Nick and Nick's past. I'm a doctor and I see it, and he knows that I see it; he wilts when I look at his nose. I say that he has no right to propose to any girl."

"Girl's aren't quite so ignorant as they used to be," George said. "But putting all that on one side, I don't think that Nick has the least intention of marrying. As to his marrying her, that is quite unthinkable. Put it right out of your head."

"I'm glad that you're so confident," Frome said. "And I'm glad that I have had this talk with you. I've been worrying over it for a good long time. Since your brother Dick's death, Nick has been at the Manor a lot, and I'm jealous."

They came to a desolate part of Tencombe Down by a

lane which led through a gut to a farm. "This is Tencombe Barrows Farm," Frome said, jumping down. "One gets to dread these lights in the upper windows; they so often mean a night call."

A dog had been furiously barking at them, leaping to the full length of his chain. Somebody opened the door: a woman appeared. "Be that you, Dr. Frome?" she asked, "I'm glad 'ee've come. We don't know what to give him and what not."

"Will you come in, Childrey?" Frome asked.

"No, thanks; I'd rather stay and mind the horse."

The dog had ceased barking when the woman had opened the door; he began again as soon as she had gone within with the doctor. At every movement of the horse he barked, leaping at his chain, and falling back half choked. George flung a rug over the horse, and sat there, watching. The barking made the horse uneasy. Besides that, something which George could not see troubled him on the down in front of him: something was out there, moving about; the horse did not like it. Presently the door re-opened; a man appeared with a jug and glass. "Quiet there, Towzer," he said, "quiet, dog. Will 'ee have a drop of perry, doctor?" he asked.

"Thanks," George said, "but I'm not a doctor. How is the sick man?"

"He's very bad," the man said, handing up the drink. "As bad as ever I knew anyone: he's got a twenched gut. It'll be a matter of Almighty God if he pulls through."

"That's bad news," George said. "I hope he's not suffering." The man began to swear and to cry.

"I only come here just afore Christmas to help him through a bit, and now his poor gut is all twenched up,

like you'd wring out a wet rag, doctor says, and he's got a matter of four hundred sheep out, all along out by, and they're lambing already, as good as; and who's to deal with 'em, except that damned Tinker? I've seen that Tinker," the man went on, "have no more feeling for a poor ewe than a gin has for fox paws."

"A savage lot, some of these shepherds," George said. "But lambing's a savage life, when you've frost and snow, and a gale blowing through you and a lot of ewes down at once."

"There's no need to tear the poor things' guts out, even so," the man said. "A ewe's got as many feelings as a man's mother."

They talked on for awhile about lambing on the downs in the terrible February of three years before, when the Tinker's father and the Tinker's father's dog Joe had been frozen stiff, with a new-born lamb in the man's coat, still alive; and about the pecking of the roads to bits under sheeps' feet; and about the Whitsun Lamb Fair; and the certainty of a late frost after all this mild. Presently the doctor came out, giving a few instructions still to the woman. Then they drove on down the gut in the chalk into a lane which led to the road. "Slaughter Hole, they call this gut," Frome said, "nobody knows why. With all these barrows beside it, I suppose there was a battle here. My poor chap's pretty bad, but I'll pull him through, I hope; just as I'll pull through your old Richard."

It looked as though he would pull old Richard through, because for the next two days the old man seemed to be doing well. George went twice a day to see him, with spoon-meats from Mrs. Baldock, and the ducks' eggs which he seemed to fancy. He lay there

quiet yet merry in his striped flannel nightgown under his patchwork quilt, hoping that his master would excuse him for falling ill just on his return, when he would be wanting the horses. Then on the third day something seemed to go wrong or to fail in him. The mirth gave way to stupor and the quiet to muttering. George came round and didn't like the looks of it; young Frome and his father came round and liked the looks of it even less. The word went about that there was like to be but one way of it with old Richard. Just at the end, when George was there, he was clearer, and talked about Mrs. Childrey as being the sweetest flower as he had ever seen; "and oh, Master George," he said, "I'll see her where I'm going and tell her you've come home. You was always her favourite. And I'll see our Lord with His cross; but 'tis sweet Mrs. Childrey I want to see again. She'd little golden curls that came down her cheeks; it would break a man's heart to think of her lying dead."

Afterwards he said that he hoped there would be horses in heaven, for he "wouldn't be happy with no horses." Then he began to calculate, or to try to calculate. "I must have given one ton, or two ton; no, I must have given a hundred ton of carrots to horses, first and last. There was Gipsy and Niggerboy, and then the sorrel and the little brown mare, and they all come a tittuppy . . ."

After this, he began to fancy that he was among the multitude of horses to whom he had given carrots. He smiled on them and called them by name and told them to "Back, lass," or "Come over, boy": and so

"the world's fashion defied,
the Lord's passion applied,
Old Richard, coachman, died."

They buried him on the Saturday beside his grand-

father, who "in the Duration of one Day had threshed, with his own Hands, the (it is believed unparalleled) Quantity of Grain of Nine Bushels"; and his father, who had once driven Dr. Johnson, and his mother, who had been the Bessie of Condicote Maying for twenty years together. So all that honest dust came together again, and Richard had his wish, "to sleep with his fathers."

George telegraphed to Nick to come to the funeral. Nick replied that he would come; but did not arrive until six that evening, having been detained by a case in town.

George was vexed with Nick for not being at the funeral, and doubly vexed at having him for the weekend after he had failed to be at the funeral. On the Sunday he was trebly vexed, because Nick went to the Manor for the afternoon, himself being not invited. In the evening he was quadruply vexed because Nick, returning, said: "Of course, the Harridews were a little hurt that you didn't come with me. They said that they took it for granted that you would come."

"Naturally," George said, "I don't go calling on people unless I'm asked to call."

"I should have thought that we were on sufficient terms of intimacy with the Harridews," Nick said, "to look in when we feel like it. It's only a graceful attention."

"They don't lack for that kind of attention."

"Naturally," Nick said. "A social centre is social. By the way, do you see much of your friend Harpit, or whatever his name is?"

"I haven't seen much of him of late," George said. "I hope to see plenty when I've got the farm more into trim. What about him?"

"Nothing about him. Only, is he quite all there, do you suppose? He's not suffering from concussion?"

"No, he's not," George said. "Are you, that you ask such a question?"

"He behaved rather queerly to Miss Harridew out hunting the other day," Nick said. "We put it down to the fact that he had had a fall."

"He did have a fall," George said.

"So his appearance showed," Nick said; "otherwise it would have been a little difficult to explain. Of course, he has lived among sailors most of his time, away from the society of ladies, or any other society. Still, there are certain things which a man who has the use of his faculties simply does not do."

"So I believe," George said.

"Of course, you're rather a friend of his, and know him better than we do, and may know what philosophical basis there is to what he does. Still, to come out of a muddy brook, with your hat smashed in, and a mask of mud on your face, and ask a lady point-blank to marry you, is a somewhat odd proceeding."

"It is somewhat odder for the lady to discuss it afterwards," George said.

"Who discussed it?" Nick asked. "Why should anyone discuss it? The thing was done in my hearing, in the check near the Pilton Road. I wasn't twenty yards away, and heard it all."

"I should have thought you would have wanted to move away," George said.

"Seeing that I was off my horse, and had him ungirthed for a breather, and wasn't expecting any such flight of fancy, it wasn't perhaps quite so easy to move away,"

Nick said. "However, since he's a friend of yours I'm glad he's not got concussion."

"He hasn't," George said.

"I'll tell Miss Harridew," Nick said, "she'll be glad to hear. Luckily, she saw the humour of the situation and wasn't at all indignant. I must say he did look an extraordinary figure of fun. It was all that she could do to keep from laughing in his face."

"Probably that's about all that any woman can do with any man," George said; "we're not so attractive, even if we do use hair-oil."

Nick returned to London, and George received a note from Carrie, asking him to call at noon. He set off with a packet of the promised worm-killer for the courts. To his annoyance he found that Carrie was with Charles Cothill, at work upon the preparation of a rose-bed among some stiff clay, to the side of the new courts. "Charles brought me some worm-killer last week," Carrie said, when she thanked him. This was a bitter arrow in itself, made the bitterer by the fact that in ten short days "Mr. Cothill" had become "Charles" to her. They were at work stubbing out shrubs; but as Charles was talking rot and Carrie was being amused by it, they weren't getting very far.

"You must let me bring over Wartell, Carrie," Charles was saying, "he goes in only for briar-roses. I can't help thinking those will be the sort for this."

"Do you think that Lord Wartell would give me some cuttings?" Carrie asked.

"Rather, later on; I'll see that he does. But look here: do you call that putting your heart into the land?"

"I've put as much as you have."

"That's all very well," he said, "I've got you to look at."

George watched them with the scorn of a practised hand for amateurs. "I say," he said at last, "are you trying to clear that plot, or digging for peanuts?"

"We're clearing the plot; don't be so sarcastic," Carrie said. "And it's a pocket of clay. It bends the tines of the forks, Mr. Vaughan said. He couldn't stand more than half-an-hour at it."

The bed had run to waste for forty years; its roses had gone back to dogroses, strong brambles and hawthorns had pushed, and two big elder-trees had grown and partly rotted. George rose, took off his coat, and went over to them.

"Let's begin at the beginning," he said; "do let's clear the surface first, instead of this lopsided practice. Have you a hatchet and a fagging-hook, the thing you would probably call a sickle?"

"Thanks, I call it a towzer, like everybody here," Carrie said. "You'll find them in the woodshed."

It took him some little time to find the towzer: when he returned with the tools he found Cothill gone, but the ascetic, slim figure of Catlington, in shirt-sleeves, in his place. George was sad not to be able to measure his power against Cothill; still, he could show Carrie his strength. He had no hedging gloves; the backs of his hands were soon red and white with scratches. He saw both Carrie and Catlington watching him with admiration. "That is one of the things I most admire," Catlington said, "the ability to do these country things as they should be done: with the absence of waste, which is style."

"What I can't get over," Carrie said, "is the advantage of beginning at the beginning. Who could have thought there was so much in it?"

While pondering on this matter as George hacked a clearing, the gong was beaten for lunch. "Oh, woe," Carrie cried, "the gong. The gong. *Alles ist verloren*. Quick in, to wash and tidy." They went quickly at her bidding, for the rage of the Squire at all unpunctuality was well known. Unfortunately all three were swinky and clayey: though they hurried their best they were seven minutes late for lunch. As they went up the little flight of stairs which led to the dining-room, Carrie whispered to George, "I'm afraid father will be frightfully cross." As they went into the little dining-room they saw that he was. There stood old Mr. Harridew beside his chair, with his back to the window, glowering down at a sirloin of beef fast cooling on a dish. He gave no word nor greeting to either man: George received a glance, Catlington a scowl. To Carrie he said: "Lunch in this house is at a quarter past one."

"I know, Father," Carrie said, "and I'm sorry; it was all my fault."

The old man reddened at the gills and swallowed. The two maids had turned white; they stood with their mouths open, waiting for a crash.

Carrie took her place, facing her father, George sat on her left, Catlington on her right. The old man said no word and moved no muscle, even when they were seated; it was like the pause before thunder. Catlington, the minister, thinking that the pause might be for him, rose, and turned to his host. "Is it your wish, sir, that I should ask a blessing?"

"What do you mean, sir, by asking a blessing?" Mr. Harridew asked. "If you must forsake the Church of your fathers for some tinker's Bethel, you might at least retain the speech of gentlemen."

"By asking a blessing, Mr. Harridew," Catlington said, "I meant to pray God to make this, our daily bread, a benefit and help to us."

"I call it saying Grace," the Squire said.

"I do not and cannot call it saying Grace, Mr. Harridew," Mr. Catlington said. "To say Grace is to say thanks, and, too often, to say it without feeling. To implore a blessing is more suited to our portion, and to my state."

"No blessing shall be asked beneath this roof," the Squire said, "nor is there occasion to say Grace, that I can see, when the sayers cannot even be punctual. Do you know that it is now twenty-six minutes past one?"

"You're fast, Father," Carrie said; "it's only twenty-four and three-quarters."

"Silence, minx."

"Certainly, Parent."

"It was my fault that we are late, sir," George said, "I kept them, cleaning the rose-bed."

Harridew did not answer this. He scowled, and his scarlet mottled into purple; he neither sat nor began to carve. For one moment he looked at Catlington's throat in a way which made George stand by for a sudden grab at the carving-knife. All this time the two maids stood trembling, with their mouths wide open. The two guests longed to be gone. Carrie had been through this so often that she cared less than anyone; in fact she provoked the explosion by putting-to the match.

"Aren't we to have any lunch, Father?" she asked.

"If you had wanted lunch, you could have come for lunch," the Squire said. "If you had come for lunch there should have been lunch. But as you did not come for lunch, but dropped in, like commercials at the Savage, for high tea, whenever it was convenient, you can get what nose-bags you choose in whatever pot-house you care." He turned suddenly with a roar upon the maids, who leaped as though stung.

"Take away this carrion," he roared, flinging the beef out of the dish into the table centre, "take the foul mess out of here to be rehotted or given to the hounds. There seems to be just as much chance of bringing people to meals at the proper time as there is of stopping radicals. They throw their church to the dogs and order follows." In his fury he stumbled over his chair, and steadied clumsily on his feet. "Take all that spoiled food out to the kennels," he roared. "Every dish of it."

Something in the hesitancy of the maids, or in the look of the vegetables, was more than he could bear.

In the wall, beside the side-table, was a trap-hatch and hoist, by which dishes came from the kitchen. He walked swiftly to it, slammed the trap-panel downwards, and flung two of the dishes into the opening. As they crashed together on the roof of the hoist, then at the bottom of its shaft, he strode out of the room, and down the few stairs to the hall. In the hall some other thing seemed to enrage him, for there came a crash upon the flagstones; then a door slammed, then another door; then swift, angry feet moved upon the gravel outside.

However, Carrie did not wait for these later sounds. She instantly dismissed the two maids. "Don't wait,"

she said, "we will help ourselves." As soon as the maids had left the room, she turned very sweetly to her right. "Will you ask a blessing, Mr. Catlington?" she said. Both men wanted to go: Carrie meant them to stay: so they stayed. Catlington asked a blessing, making it a long one; it came upon the scene like oil upon a head sea.

It had hardly ended when they heard upon the gravel outside the rush of the hoofs of a horse, furiously urged. They heard the horse steady, and leap, and then go on upon the turf of the field in front. "He's gone off on his hunter, barebacked," Carrie said, "with only a headstall. I do hope he won't let him down."

There was a feeling of constraint upon the guests, who had not been made welcome to the board.

"We'll leave the meat where it is for the present," Carrie said. "There's a trifle here and some cheese and oatcakes." To help her through the difficult time, they ate and drank an unhappy meal.

"Come, cheer up, my lads," Carrie said, afterwards. "We've got coffee and chocolates; and everybody says that my sloe-gin is a prime tap." However, the men were anxious to be gone, though each wanted to go after the other. Catlington showed the greater care for Carrie.

"If you would walk a little of the way with me, Mr. Childrey," he said, "it would be conferring a very real kindness."

George felt a liking for the minister. It was true that the fellow was a rival, still, even if he were in love with Carrie, he had no earthly chance, so that his competition did not count. A woman could not want a creature all soul, any more than she could want a creature all body.

"I'll walk along with you with pleasure," he said: so

off they went. The hunter's tracks were plain on gravel and grass.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Catlington," George said, "we'll fetch a compass round the fence there, to follow the hunter's tracks. I'm afraid Mr. Harridew may well have met with a fall."

"There is no need, Mr. Childrey," the minister said. "There is Mr. Harridew returning to the house behind us." Glancing back George saw him returning on a horse all dark and lathery with sweat. The two men walked on.

"You must have enjoyed your time in the wilderness, Mr. Childrey," Catlington said. "You have earned your living by your hands, by the sweat of your brow, which is surely one of the blessed things that life offers."

"It's a blessed thing that most people dodge, if they can," George said.

"It's the beginning of the end, when they do," Mr. Catlington said. "But perhaps, as a weakling, I overestimate the power. And yet I envy my country-people here their power and skill of hand. Hardly a day passes without my being made conscious of it. And I long for it myself more than I can say."

"One always longs for the other fellow's skill," George said. "Everybody has something. I remember seeing a man in the West. I thought him just about a perfect lout; but I learned later he was even great in his way: he was the Baked Potato Champion."

"You mean he baked potatoes?"

"No, he ate them baked, against all comers; he ate them quicker and held more, so that he had both skill and capacity."

"That is a very terrible story, Mr. Childrey."

"It was his talent, or perfectness."

"I sometimes ask myself," Mr. Catlington said, "whether teachers and preachers have any chance whatsoever against the forces arrayed against us."

"Everybody in this wide earth," George said, "who is doing anything at all worth doing, asks that from time to time. Does it matter whether you have a chance? In a way it doesn't matter a toss. If the thing is worth doing, to yourself, you do it and go on doing it."

"And what, when the moment comes, Mr. Childrey, when you ask yourself, 'Is this thing worth doing?'"

"I've never had to ask myself that," George said. "Whenever I've been reasonably well I've known that the thing was worth doing."

"Ah," Mr. Catlington said, "perhaps it is all in that, in being reasonably well."

They turned into the fields which led towards Hope Goneaway.

"I suppose that your religious sense is sound asleep, Mr. Childrey," Mr. Catlington said.

"I really don't know," George said, "whether it's asleep or not. I've never had any religious sense of any sort, so far as I know. I haven't even hated having to go to church, much. It means nothing to me; never has; nothing whatever."

"To me it means everything, unutterably."

They walked on for a while. George was puzzled, yet he felt that Catlington needed something from him, either comfort, or the relief of confession; the fellow was plainly deeply stirred.

"I suppose you're an ardent huntsman," Mr. Catlington said.

"As ardent as I can afford," George said.

"When I was a boy," Catlington said, "I had a fondness for it too. Then I was torn asunder with the knowledge that this world and its ways are all pride of the eye and lust of the flesh."

"Aren't they jolly good things, though?" George said. "The eye has often good cause to be proud; just as God's had, when He saw that His work was good. I'd rather have an eye proud than blind any day. As to lust of the flesh, there'd jolly soon be neither lust nor flesh without it."

"The eternal has not yet been kindled in you, Mr. Childrey."

"Not to my knowledge," George said, wondering what the fellow meant.

"It has been kindled in me," the minister said. "It was like a wave of fire, terrible . . . and joy. Now another wave of fire rolls in on me, and I ask, is it of God, or is it only pride and lust?"

"I'm afraid I'm not much good at these things," George said. "Will you tell me what it is exactly that is troubling you?"

"It is this, Mr. Childrey," Catlington said: "I gave up all, but the eighty pounds a year which I cannot touch, to come here to preach as a minister of Christ's Chosen. Now I love a woman to such an extreme that I know not what to do. Can I ask her to share such a lot as I have taken? I say, no. Then I ask, why not? Since to me my way is the only possible way, might it not be her way, too? Then I ask, what right have I to follow my own

temporal happiness in this way; to consider it, even for a moment, when my task is in eternal things? Mr. Childrey, I fear it is the flesh urging me and tempting me. And the pride of my mind is ever labouring excuses for the flesh, and both are at war with my soul to lure me from grace. And yet, when I think upon this lady, upon her beauty, her '*beau dire*,' her goodness and kindness, though not yet touched to the eternal, truly I am so faint that I can scarcely think of my election. And indeed I am visited for it, because the waters within me are gone dry; I am 'in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, that no man passed through, and where no man dwells.' "

Indeed, now that George saw more clearly, the man was in the wilderness: he was being burnt up and burnt out by a fire within. His face was gaunt and drawn; he spoke from an intensity, near to madness, that made him both awful and very beautiful. George could not understand more than one-third of what was said, but felt the depth of the feeling and wondered that a thing so simple as love should have become so complex with thinking.

"It seems to me," he said, "that if you love a person to the point of wanting to marry, then that is that; you ask her. If she loves you to that point, that is that; she takes you. You can settle the other points between you. But you can't expect to be the same man after a complete change as before it." They had paused for this talk at a little wooden bridge over a brook.

Catlington searched his face while considering an answer. "No," he said, "you have answered me. Marriage would be the beginning of another life."

"It is strange your telling me this just here," George

said. "It was here, on that flat bit of grass across the stile, that those two men fought when I was a child; they were jealous of each other. They both died from their wounds."

"I have heard of that," Catlington said. "The warning of such results of love is ever in my thoughts."

"I'm afraid I'll have to be turning back, now," George said.

"One moment more, Mr. Childrey," Catlington said; "you have listened kindly and patiently to my trouble. I should be wanting in frankness if I did not tell you all. I am in love with Miss Caroline Harridew; from this you will gather how loath I am to offer the penury of my position and the nothingness of my future."

George had expected this, yet found the answer hard. "I can only say, cheer up," he said. "These things settle themselves in the long run. Of course, I only speak about the human side. About the religious side, I should say, ask some other clergyman. Why not ask Mr. Holyport?"

"He is a married man," Mr. Catlington replied; "he would not feel my problem as I feel it. But now let me thank you for your help, which I had neither right to claim nor manners to demand. It was the selfishness of sickness that made me speak. I have been incapable of my own distress. I thank you for your patience."

He gave George a searching glance, and at once set off towards Hope Goneaway, torn with torment, yet sustained, leaving George partly admiring, partly jealous; for suppose Carrie cared for that intensity, suppose those skinny arms were to close about her and that skull-face to be pressed to hers? "Ah, she couldn't," he thought,

"besides the old man would smash his face in." Still, the thought recurred, all the way home. "Women are mad about ministers, and they do most jolly well like to be loved. They are often swept off their feet merely because some sweep wants to do the sweeping."

CHAPTER VI

HE was to sup that night with Vaughan the reveller: there he found Cannonbone, the long, thin gentleman; Mr. Tossit, friend to Cannonbone, a short, plump gentleman; and Old J., the horse-dealer, who had come there on business and been asked to stay. There was also a white-faced, seedy-looking man, who wore an unusual kind of tie. He was introduced to George as the Captain.

As George entered the room Old J. was finishing a most improper tale. "There they were in fragrant delight, as they call it," he was saying. "Tablo veevong."

Cannonbone, who resented Old J.'s presence there, because he owed him money, seemed inclined to resent the tale. Then they all went in to an exceedingly good bachelor's supper, with a great deal of drink. After a few glasses, Old J., who thought himself the soul of the party, went on from strength to strength, to the great joy of Mr. Tossit and the growing indignation of Cannonbone. Old J. at last surpassed himself. "So when he was properly pickled," he cried, "d——d if old Roger didn't paint him like a mandril." Spirited details followed.

"Not very elevating, I must say," Cannonbone said, fixing his surly grey eye on Old J.

"Elevating?" Old J. said. "Who's talking about elevating? I'll elevate nothing except the festive glass. Drink and be damned to you."

"I'll not be damned by you," Cannonbone said.

"Come, come," Old J. said, "I didn't mean that. A glass of wine with you, and forget it."

"Come along, Cannonbone," Vaughan said; "fill up, the two of you, and drink fair."

Cannonbone clinked glasses and drank with Old J., though without any grace of manner. He muttered something under his breath to the Captain, about not knowing what Vaughan was doing having a fellow like that here. The Captain suggested that Tossit should sing his song about the Nosing Hound. Mr. Tossit said that dammit, he wasn't in very good voice, and wasn't very sure of his words, but dammit he wouldn't mind trying.

"Right," Old J. cried, "some good old bawdy ballad now that will stir the blood like a strumpet."

"I say, Vaughan," Cannonbone said, "how much more of this are we to have to endure?"

"Carrowbo, old boy," Tossit said, "I'm going to sing." He had climbed up on to his chair, where he swayed a little. He had gone somewhat white since leaving the quiet of his seat, but he bravely sang the first and second stanzas of the ballad of the Nosing Hound. Then as he said, "Chorus, gents: fill every glass and let it reach the stars," he suddenly slipped from his perch into his chair, looking very white indeed.

"You'd better come out," Vaughan said, hooking him out by the arm. Mr. Tossit did not return for some few minutes; in fact did not return to the gathering, but lay down for awhile in the sitting-room till he felt strong enough to return to his inn.

"Odd thing about Tossit," Cannonbone said, as Vaughan re-entered the room. "He's got no head for wine. Now malt never gravels him at all."

"A pity he never finished his song," Vaughan said. "He's not got much voice, but he sings in tune, which is something, and he sings all the time. But come on, you fellows, into the smoking-room, and we'll see if we can't make a punch." They found that they could both make, and drink, two punches. Vaughan sang three songs, each less seemly than the one before it, to the great delight of Old J. "You're a randy dog, Vaughan," he cried. "How are you getting on with that girl at Seekings? You know, you fellers, he's after the girl at Seekings: a very pretty girl, Ellen, the daughter of that old poacher, Baldy. How's the love-affair progressing, Vaughan-oh?"

"Look here, it's your turn to sing," Vaughan said. "Up you come, J., on your hind legs and sing."

Old J. came out in front of the fire on unsteady legs, with a puffing of breath, as though he were trying to cool something. Cannonbone looked at him with growing dislike and disfavour. The old man steadied himself by the mantel, having discovered since he rose how drunk he was.

"I better not have any more," he said, "except just a little night-cap to rock me in the arms of Maggy Murphy. I'm going to sing you a little song about an increase in the population."

"Let's have no pot-house smut here," Cannonbone said.

"Ladies can leave, if they want to spare their blushes," the old man said.

"Without being ladies," Cannonbone said, "there is such a thing as decent feeling."

"Dry up, Cannie," Vaughan said, "or wet up, and let the nightingale let fly."

"I don't see why he should be permitted to let fly with a lot of low music-hall filth that he got from a——"

"Well, stop your ears," Vaughan said, "or go into the next room."

"I don't know why Captain Cannonbone should object to a song he hasn't heard," the old man said; "he has not objected, so far as I could see or hear, to any that he has heard."

"You've described your song, and I do object."

"I mentioned the subject of it. If you will kindly go into the next room I'll begin."

"No need to go into the next room: it's midnight. I'll be off, Vaughan," Cannonbone said. "Another time, please don't ask me if this person is to be here. I'm accustomed to meeting only gentlemen, in places where I dine."

After he had gone Old J. winked at the company. "He owes me forty-seven quid nineteen and ninepence for value received," he said, "and I'm putting the screw on. He's not got a tosser to buy a potsherd for a scratch."

George didn't quite know how it came about; but he had discovered that the Captain was a most awfully good fellow and a very clever fellow, in fact, *the* fellow who drew the thumb-nail sketches in *Pips and Pigskin*, the sporting weekly. He and the Captain were waltzing and singing and enjoying themselves enormously, while within George was fast rising up the desire to smash something, if possible a big thing, that would make a big smash.

Then, somehow, Old J. was gone, the Captain was trying to light his bedroom candle (he was staying with Vaughan), lighting his match at one end of the room, and tilting with it at the candle, which was at the other.

"This beatstenpegginanyday," he was saying. "Come-alongandsee metenpeggin. Championtenpegger."

Then, somehow, George was asking the Captain if he were an artist, and the Captain was saying: "I'll tellyou-family secret. Lots-of-fellers-are-artists. Only two-are-any-good. Feller-called Michael-Angelo-and-me. Michael-Angelo-feller's dead. Feller-couldn't-draw-fox-hounds."

George said that there was a fellow out at the Bince who could draw fox-hounds. "Then-he-can't-be Michael-Angelo," the Captain said, "because Michael-Angelo—awfully-good-artist-feller—couldn't-draw-fox-hounds, not even for little nuts. Poor feller tried, tried for years, couldn't, so just died broken heart. Very sad for the feller's family."

Then, somehow, the Captain was sitting on an oaken chest saying, "There's-nothing-so-sad-as-life, properly considered."

"Life isn't sad," George said; "I want to sing."

"Then you're-norr-an-artist-if-you-wanna-sing," the Captain said. "I wanna-weep. I wanna-weep-a-lovely-mugful."

"You get along to bed and weep," Vaughan said, "a fellow can weep lovely tears in bed."

"There's-a-lorr-of-truth in what you say," the Captain said, "a lot-of-mournful-truth."

Then, somehow, Vaughan and George were out in the clear moonlight, refreshed by the air, Vaughan saying that he would walk three fields with him, and both agreeing that it was amazing how few people could stand liquor, since it was not as if Old J. and the others had had much. Then Vaughan became most confidential. "I never go to bed before two," he was saying; "there's not

much attraction in a bachelor's bed, if you ask me. For you know," he said, breaking off a moment to yodel in his fine voice, "you know, this being a bachelor, it may suit monks and eunuchs, but it's hell on a town bull. So I'm going to stud, like the rest: all fellows go to stud in the end. There's a damned pretty little filly here, and I'm going to have her. If I can't have her the ordinary way, I'll compromise her, and then she'll have to have me."

They were now crossing the end of a tongue of larch-wood; he suddenly stopped, and lifted his voice in a clear and perfect owl-hoot of "Carrie Harridew," to which an owl at once replied.

"That was a good one," he said. "I used to come out here with a girl: she did it even better than I; taught me, in fact. By Jove, there's our bower, that old fallen tree. I must come out here with Carrie."

Drink made George as generous as it made Vaughan loose: he did not punch Vaughan in the mouth, but said drily, "You'll find marriage a change."

"I'm sick of being a bachelor," Vaughan said, "I dare-say I'll be sick of marriage within a fortnight. This sex is a perfect curse. I'm of the opinion of the old josser who said we ought to propagate like trees: drop a few acorns before hunting begins, and then be done with it for the year."

They parted, after this, in Hemmings' Long Pasture, where George saw a travelling fox crossing in the moon-light, with occasional pauses to bark. The barking roused the retreating Vaughan to more owl-cries of "Carrie Harridew," to which owls from all the marvellous night gave answer. "By George," George said aloud, "all the male devils in this countryside are in love with her, every one;

but I'm in the race, too. I can give Vaughan a stone; and Catlington two; and Bunny Manor three; and Mike thirty; and Nick three hundred; and that long-haired Ethelberta down at the brook, he's out of it; and Steer's out of it, too, poor devil; but for Charles Cothill I'd think I'd a chance." He tore off his light evening coat, rolled it and slung it across his shoulder. Then he set off running across fields to the Bartons, on a mile of good grass, over which the point-to-point galloped every spring. In his wild mind he was racing the other six lovers. He shouted as he ran. When the fences were too high, he took the stiles; otherwise, he leapt them. He got his shoes full of mud and water in the ditches; he tore his clothes and lost his cap. As he crossed the Tineton Road, with his white shirt-front laid bare and his war-cries issuing from his throat, the Pimply Whatto, slinking back with pheasants for the publican at the Cock, thought that he was the ghost of the Bloody Runner, who brought the plague to Condicote in 1665, "whereof 97 persons dyed."

CHAPTER VII

EDWYN HYACINTHUS ARMYTAGE MANOR, once the famous Tantshire bat, now a trainer of racehorses, came down to breakfast at half-past ten, much the worse for his last night's whiskey. He was cold, but could not stand the stuffiness of his room: he opened the window and shivered. He looked at the breakfast, of bacon rashers now set in cold grease, which drove him again to the window. He picked up a piece of leathery cold toast; he could not eat it. The tea was cold; he could not drink it. He moved over to the fire, feeling very unwell, while he looked at his letters: two bills, a demand for money and a complaint that his eldest son Nob had used insulting language to a farmer's daughter at Cheddesdon. "There it is again," he muttered, "the dear boy is too outspoken. I really must speak to him."

He rose to his feet, holding by the mantelpiece. The reek of the cold tobacco pipes lying there was more than he could bear; he had to move away. On the mantelpiece was a glass case containing a cricket-bat much bound and pegged, with an inscribed brass plate.

"With this Bat
Edwyn Hyacinthus Armytage Manor
Made the Winning Hit

In the Match Tantshire *v.* the Rest of England
After Batting for seven consecutive Hours . . . etc."

It was an inscription which never failed to give him satisfaction or comfort. "Yes," he thought, as he read

it over again, "consecutive hours, the last man in, and the last four out for duck. The boys ought to remember that we stand for something here." He rang the bell. "I shall speak to the dear boy quite firmly."

At a second ringing of the bell, a tall, sluttish young woman appeared; she had a forbidding face, criminal in the brow, mentally deficient below. She entered boldly, trying to swallow a piece of stickjaw which was embarrassing her teeth.

"Ask Mr. Edwyn to be so good as to come to speak to me," he said. She nodded (she could not well speak) and returned to the kitchen. "What does he want, now?" the cook asked.

"Wants Nob," the maid answered. "Where is he?"

"Gone down the garden with his gun," the cook said.

"Well, he can go and fetch him hisself, then," the maid said. When Mr. Manor rang again, to ask if Mr. Edwyn were coming, she said that she had not been able to find him. "Then clear away the breakfast things," he said. "It is now very late." She muttered that it was not she who was late, but someone else.

Mr. Manor took a carriage rug, wrapped it well round himself, went into his study (as he called it) and mixed himself a drink. "Ah," he said, "I sadly needed that. It is remarkable how it clears the cobwebs. I really think that with a cool pickle I may be able to attend to business." He rang the bell to demand a breakfast tray, a pickle bottle and a dessert plate with a dessert knife and fork. "And see that there is a clean napkin over the tray," he said. When these things were brought to him he breakfasted upon a little cucumber.

He remembered suddenly that he had to go in to Tat-

chester to bring a friend to lunch. "I really do not feel able to concentrate so far," he said. "My nerves are not what they were. I must find Edwyn, though indeed I do not like venturing out on this cold morning."

He found Edwyn in the lower paddock, "potting at rabbits."

"Edwyn, my dear boy," he said, "will you take the trap in to Tatchester, to meet the 12.40, to bring out Sir Whitacre?"

"Oh, hell," the dear boy said. "Surely you can meet your beastly friends yourself."

"Edwyn, that is not the way to talk."

"Well, why can't you?"

"I am not finding myself very well this morning, and do not feel equal to it."

"You were drunk last night," Nob said. "It's a nice slack game, isn't it, to get drunk at night and then expect another chap to do your jobs next day? I've got my own work to do."

"I will see that your work does not suffer, but you realize that Sir Whitacre must be met."

"Oh, hell," Nob said. "Well, all right; I suppose I must sacrifice myself. I do wish to God you'd either get a new liver or chuck necking Scotch the way you do. If you'd neck a decent brand it would be something. Your guts aren't galvanized, I suppose you know."

"Yes, Edwyn, I do know," the father answered, "and I wish that you would moderate your language, not only to myself, but to others. A lady at Cheddesdon writes to me this morning saying that you used insulting language to her daughter. I can only conclude that she was mistaken."

"Oh, hell," Nob said. "Do you want me to meet this train?"

"Yes, Edwyn, my dear boy."

"Then keep your sermon for the mount," Nob said. "Oh, hell," he went on, as he rose to his feet. "This is the one bit of rabbiting I've had this week." He walked off quickly towards the stables, leaving his father to walk back to the house alone. In the stable-loft he found his younger brother Hyacinthus sitting on a hay-truss "potting at rats."

"Up you get, Cob," Nob said; "you've got to go into Tatchester to meet old Corpse Face by the 12.40."

"The hell I have. Who says so?" Cob answered.

"I say so, and the guv'nor says so."

"Well, you can both go to hell, then," Cob said.

"No lip. Out you get, now."

"The hell with out I get. Where the hell's Bunny?"

"How the hell do I know?"

"Well, find Bunny, and tell him he's got to go."

"I'll wring your neck if you don't hop it," Nob said. "Hop it. And you'll get hell if you keep Corpse Face waiting, remember."

"Oh, hell," Cob said, rising to his feet. "This is the one bit of ratting I've had this month." He walked off quickly to the yard, where he found his younger brother, Ermytage, preparing to mount a horse.

"None of that shinnannikin, Bunny," he said. "You've got to drive to Tatchester to meet old Skunk's Breath by the 12.40."

"Who says I've got to?" Bunny asked.

"I say so, and the guv'nor says so."

"He said nothing to me about it," Bunny said, "and I'm otherwise engaged."

"The hell you're engaged. What engagement?"

"You've not got any time to waste talking, if you're to meet the 12.40," Bunny said, as he mounted and rode off.

"Yah, you Scripture Text," Cob called after him. "Go off to make love to Carrie Harridew, the paintedest punk in punkery."

He bribed a stable-lad to go to Tatchester, while he returned to his rattring. Nob, returning to his rabbiting, was seen by his father. "Edwyn, my dear boy," the father called, "surely I told you to go to Tatchester."

"Don't excite yourself," Nob said, "Cob's going."

Bunny rode on to the Manor, where he found Carrie at work upon the rose-bed with Charles Cothill. The rubbish had been cleared and was now burning in a bonfire: the two were digging round the roots of a felled laurel: they were very mucky and merry together, and not working too hard.

"Oh, Bunny," Carrie cried, "how kind of you to come. We're digging out a root. Will you take a pick and help?"

"I'll be delighted, I'm sure," he said. He was wearing his new suit for the first time, but he took off his coat and went to work. When the roots were all cut, Bunny got a rope from the stable. They tied it to the stumps and tried to drag the mass out of the pit. As they did not know how to pull, this failed.

"Couldn't some of your men give us a hand?" Bunny asked. "Alas, no," Carrie said. "Our Parent, as Louey

calls him, only let us make the court on condition that we did not take any of the men from their work, ever."

"I know what I can do," Bunny said; "if I may borrow a collar and traces from the farm here, I'll fetch the cricket pony's boots and take my horse to it."

"Oh, no, Bunny," Carrie said; "it's a long way down to the cricket-pitch."

"Oh, no," he said; "only five or six hundred yards."

"Why not take the horse to it without the boots?" Charles asked.

"I daren't," Carrie said.

"The ground is hard enough," Charles said.

"Mr. Harridew wouldn't like it," Bunny said.

"Father doesn't like to see any hoof-mark on this grass," Carrie said.

"I'll run on down to old Joe's then, and fetch the boots," Bunny said.

"Good man; stout feller," said Charles, who wanted him out of the way.

"Oh, Bunny, I think you are a perfect saint," said Carrie, who wanted the work done.

Bunny set off at a run, delighted at the chance of serving her.

"I oughtn't to have given him all that trouble," Carrie said.

"You most jolly well ought to have," Charles said. "Never discourage zeal in anybody. Besides, you know you've made him happy for a week."

"I'm not so sure," she said; she was beginning to wonder whether her presence did make people happy. "But I am so sorry for Bunny, with that father and those depraved elder brothers."

"It's not a promising home," Charles said. "I'm sorry that they have fallen foul of you."

"They haven't," Carrie said. "They've only been a little rude, out hunting, swearing at me for not getting out of their way, and that sort of thing; but an oath is a term of endearment from these two. I'm so afraid that between them they may corrupt Bunny again."

"I don't think Bunny will be far corrupted while he can come here to see you," Charles said. "There has been a general tendency upwards since you came back from Italy. The Green Man is said to have lost half its custom."

"I suppose the pretty barmaid married," Carrie said. "Now, let's get the elder roots out; otherwise they'll spring."

"We have done enough for honour," he said. "I wanted to ask you: Are you going to be at the Cock-and-Pye next week?"

"I've got nothing to ride," Carrie said. "My poor mare's leg has filled again."

"What wretched luck; but look here, might I send over Mamzelle for you? She's a nice little thing. She's as safe as a bus. My sister Topsy often rides her."

"That would be delightful," Carrie said.

"You're coming to lunch on Saturday," he said. "If you come in riding things you can try her, and Tradoodle as well, and take whichever you like."

"Mamzelle for me, please," Carrie said, "if you can really spare her. And if I let her down, I shall have to mortgage my library."

"You won't let her down any more than she'll let you."

"It would be a pity to miss the Cock-and-Pye," he said. "It's a jolly meet, and you're almost sure of a run. If they find in Tuttocks Wood they'll go away to Ham-farthing; and if they find in Ghost Heath they'll go away to Larks Leybourne. You're on the grass, either way."

"It will be beautiful," she said. "But while Bunny is fetching the pony I'm sure you'd like to come in for a drink and smoke."

No young man ever objected to being alone with Carrie. They went indoors together to the sitting-room where they had played the cricket match. Here Carrie offered him his choice.

"Charles," she said, "I can offer you the household swipes, or cider, or perry, or whiskey, or a gin and dry ginger, or a rum and milk, or a port royal sangaree, or a long John Collins, or a swizzle, or three different sorts of cocktail, or quinine water. The Harridew fortunes may affect the roof, but thank heaven, the cellar's what it always has been."

Charles chose a sangaree and admired her deftness in making it. He smoked a cigarette while he sipped it; she drank a little water, lit a cigarette, and allowed it to go out. "Of all the happy states," he said, "this is the happiest: to have all the rewards of virtue while the other fellow is earning them."

"Poor Bunny," she said. "You oughtn't to mock at him."

"I don't, at all. He's a lot too happy for that."

Meanwhile Bunny reached the Jubilee Tea Rooms beside the cricket-pitch: there he found the groundsman's wife getting ready the cups for the Mothers' Annual Tea.

"Is Joe anywhere about, Mrs. Willowbat?" he asked.

"No, Joe've gone about some potatoes, Master Bunny," she said. "Was it anything about the concert?"

"No," he said, "I want to borrow the horse-boots."

"What we call the mittens?" she said, "what we put on Blind Billy? Why, they're in the pavilion, locked up, Master Bunny."

"Could I have the key and borrow them?"

"Joe've got the key on him," she said; "the young gentlemen do so borrow the key and leave things about. But he won't be long, Master Bunny, if you'll please to take a seat."

Bunny took a seat and talked about Joe's shoulder, and whether it would be well enough to let him bowl. Mrs. Willowbat thought it would be. Then they talked about the coming cricket season, and how young Mr. Childrey was back at the Bartons, and whether he would play again. Mrs. Joe supposed that he would be getting married. "They do say he've been up at the Manor a lot lately; going after Miss Carrie, I suppose, like the rest of them: they're all for pleasure."

Bunny was not going to discuss this point; he asked what she was fancying for the Liverpool. Mrs. Joe had her fancy, shrewdly reached by long study: the merits and demerits of twenty horses and riders were discussed, till Joe came in.

"What might you want the mittens for, Master Bunny?" Joe asked. Bunny explained.

"Ah, you'd want them for that," Joe agreed. "If you'm going to take a horse on Mr. Harridew's grass you'll have to put mittens on him, or you'll have your head blowed off of you. For the old gentleman is a right fiery cock when

it comes to trampling on his grass. He won't let anyone do that, not to leave a mark. So I'll have to get the mittens out of the pavilion, for I've not had them out this year."

There was a long search in the pavilion among old pads, old decaying bags, umpires' coats, nets and spiked shoes, but the muffled shoes for the pony that dragged the roller were not there. "I'm sure I thought I left them here," Joe said. "Let me see, now. I last mowed and rolled, about beginning of October; I had 'em on him then; and I must have took them off, mustn't I? I thought I'd put 'em here, unless someone have borrowed them. Maybe the missus has seen 'em."

The missus hadn't seen them, but was sure that they were in the pavilion, "For we always keep all the cricket things together," she explained, "and then we know whereabouts to look for them. We generally have them up like in the corner."

They were debating this when Mrs. Alf, Mrs. Joe's daughter, joined in from over the way. "Was it like the boots for the pony that you were looking for?" she asked; "because if it's the boots, the young gentlemen at the Grammar School borrowed them for the play-acting, oh, a long time ago, before Christmas. Didn't they ever bring them back? Oh, dear, now they did ought to have brought them back, didn't they? For they promised me faithfully they'd bring them back the next morning. It was the morning you was gone to Tatchester about the onions for Mrs. Holyport, and I took the key from the hook and told the young gentleman to put it back the same when he'd done with it."

"I'd better go up to the school and ask about them,"

Bunny said. It was a half-mile run to the school. The master's wife, who received him, said that the acting things were all just as they'd been left in the acting-room at the end of the term before. There, in the litter and filth of the production, among trodden grease-paint, Armenian bole, leaked-out spirit-gum, crêpe hair, dirty programmes and properties, they discovered three of the boots. Bunny, pursuing the matter further alone, discovered the fourth in a position of some ignominy, where a youthful wag with more decorative sense than decorum had tied it. Having secured all the four he ran back with them to the Manor.

Carrie had asked him to lunch, but he was now too late to go in. He borrowed a collar and chains from the home farm, took his horse down to the stump, booted him, hove out the roots into a barrow, and tidied up the mess. When he had finished, at about a quarter past two, Carrie and Charles came out to look at what they had done.

"What, Bunny?" Carrie cried, "you here; but we were expecting you to lunch."

"I know," Bunny said, "but I was late, and I thought Mr. Harridew wouldn't like me to come in late."

"But where's the stump?" Carrie said.

"It's here in the barrow," he said.

"Why, he's got it out," she said. "That is splendid of you, Bunny. Isn't it splendid of him, Charles?"

"Splendid," Charles said. "How on earth did you get it carted, Bunny?"

"Oh, I dragged it up a couple of planks into a barrow."

"And toiling all the while we were gorging," Carrie

said. "And not a trace on the grass anywhere. How did you manage that, Bunny?"

"Oh, I put the lawn-shoes on him, and then I've swept it up a little," Bunny said.

"But you are a perfect paragon."

"Like the chap in the tomb at Naunton Crucis," Charles said; "he was not paragonned in Nature or Art."

"But Bunny, dear," Carrie cried, "you've had no lunch."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," Bunny said. Indeed, nothing mattered since Carrie had called him "Bunny, dear."

"But it does matter, it matters a lot, and I'll see that you have something. Come on in at once, Bunny."

So Bunny was led within, and fed upon biscuits, cheese and raisins by the hands of his beloved, while Charles was left outside, stirring up the bonfire with a stake, and wondering whether he should or should not propose to Carrie, when next this young cub, Bunny, should give him a chance.

He was not quite sure about it when she was not in sight. When she was there it was all so simple and certain.

Carrie waited on Bunny through a meal which he made very brief, to spare her; then she took him to the sitting-room to give him coffee. He watched her as she made it, marvelling at the beauty of her intentness and at the deftness of her hands. His own could deal with troublesome horses and could avoid being bitten by ferrets, but he was amazed at her power of being swift and certain among cups.

"Carrie," he said, "would you like to hunt on the Cock-

and-Pye Day? Because, if you would, could I lend you Corunna? I know your mare won't be fit."

"How do you know that, Bunny?"

"I had a look at her leg when I put up my hack," he said. "I'm afraid it's her heart that's the cause. If she could come over to Tencombe later on, I could get old Roger to rub her: he's the best anywhere near here. But Corunna is at your service; he's quite a good lady's horse, and it would be a kindness to him."

"Thank you, Bunny; but Mr. Cothill has just very kindly offered me his mare, and I have half accepted."

"Just my luck, isn't it?" Bunny said. "Still, Corunna's at your service at any other time, Carrie. I could send him over for you while Roger treats the mare. If ever you want a horse for anything, and you'll do me the honour to tell me, I'll always, or almost always, be able to let you have one."

"Thank you, Bunny."

"I know you'll think me a boy," Bunny said, "and I ought not to say it, for you'll only think me a young ass. So I am, if you like; but you don't know what you are to me."

"A very good friend, Bunny, and I want you always to think me that."

"I shall think you that," he said. It wasn't what he wanted. His look of utter misery brought tears to Carrie's eyes. She saw him looking at her with eyes of despair. Then he walked quickly out and away to the stables to fetch his horse.

"I can't let him go like that," Carrie moaned; "he's a dear, nice boy. Oh, what can I do or say?"

There was not much time. She wrote a little note:

DEAR BUNNY,

Wherever you go, I shall bless you for your thought of me.
CARRIE.

She folded this and ran with it to open the gate for him as he rode out. Knowing that he would be quite beyond speech she pressed the note into his hand, and said, "I want you to read this presently. Dear boy, good-bye." He said "Thank you," but could not look at her; he rode on erect, in despair.

As he crossed the bridge over the Yell Brook, about a mile further on, he remembered that Cornelia Bithechurch lived not far from there, in the Lower Hope, and that Carrie had sometimes taken jellies to her. He felt that he, too, must do something for her, for Carrie's sake, so he turned up the lane to her cottage. "Mrs. Bithechurch," he said, as the slatternly, limp creature came out, with a wailing child in her arms, "Mrs. Bithechurch, here's something for the children." She looked like a dark poppy after rain. He gave her all his having (five and sixpence) greatly to her surprise, and at once cantered away, covered with blushes. Half-a-crown of the money she managed to hide in the baby's clothes, and with this, later, she did contrive to buy something for the children; but the remaining three shillings, Bithechurch, who had been listening behind the door, seized forthwith, and going at once to the Waggon drank himself drunk there. Coming home pot-glorious, he beat Cornelia with a stick and said he'd learn her to go taking money from gentlemen, for that was how women came to their ruin.

The moment was painful to Carrie, who liked and respected Bunny. She was very, very sorry for him. She

went out to her gardening with Charles in an altered mood; things weren't so jolly as they had been before lunch. "This will be a jolly fine bed when I've finished with it," Charles said: "dwarf roses in front, standards further back, and big Persian briars at the back, with nightingales singing of love."

"They'll be singing out 'forty—love' before they've been here long," Carrie said. "I wonder if you'd now be a saint and do a little rolling?"

Charles, although not a saint, rolled the newly laid lawn for half an hour, while Carrie dug out roots. He had a constant view of her as he rolled. She was a lovely creature, specially lovely in the open air in that sunny winter weather, with the glow of health on her face. She had started work in a country woman's sunbonnet (which became her), now she had thrown it off and worked bareheaded, with her exquisite hair blowing into tangles. Still, something had happened; he could not ask her to marry him: something had put them far apart again. Presently, it was time for him to go.

After he had gone, Jane called Carrie into the hard, bare room where she often sat at work upon those kinds of estate business which most perplexed her father. She was smoking a cigarette from a long holder (she had a pipe on the mantelpiece). Life had been bitter to her, she found tobacco soothing.

"Sit and talk to me a minute, Carrie, will you?" she said, "and don't mind if I smoke, or if I'm personal. I want to talk to you about Charles Cothill. He's plainly very fond of you."

"I don't think that he is, Jane," Carrie said. "He likes coming over here occasionally, and we have certain

tastes in common, such as riding, and gardening. Then he is sometimes amusing in a way that I enjoy, so that he finds me an audience. Apart from that, he is like the others: they got into the way of coming before Louey was engaged, and they still come. Louey and I happen to be the only girls in this district who can entertain young men. It's a very girl-less neighbourhood."

"It is," Jane said, "and you happen to be very beautiful. Now have you, yourself, any particular feeling for Charles Cothill?"

"I like him and respect him. I've not yet seen any bad quality in him."

"No," Jane said. "He is a thoroughly nice young fellow; with a good deal in him and no doubt a career before him. His people have been at Sleins for centuries, and he will have Sleins when his mother dies. He is running it very ably for her; it is a good property, and he is improving it. There is nothing against him, but all these things and many more for him. Why not think of him a little?"

"I have never thought of him at all in that sort of way."

"No, but why not, Carrie? He has all these qualities which could make a woman happy, and no serious blemish that I can think of. You would be a lot happier settled. With Louey gone from home, as she will be next month, you will be very lonely here. Besides, the strain of too many adorers will be very painful to you."

"It is painful already," Carrie said; "but I do not think of Charles in that light."

"He has said nothing to me, of course," Jane said.

"But I see that he thinks of you in that light. I felt that I must point out the advantages; that is all."

Carrie kissed Jane dutifully, as she would have kissed a governess, and went to her room, thinking of the disadvantages, the chief of which was Mrs. Cothill, Charles's mother, with a third of life still before her, the owner of Sleins, a beautiful woman, with whom Carrie could not well agree. "It would be like living under Janey still," she thought. "I do love and admire Janey, but oh, I wish she would realize that I am grown up."

Carrie drove over to Sleins, thinking of what Jane had said. She liked the Sleins in many ways; she also liked the thought that someone wanted it to be hers. It was, indeed, a pleasant house. You drove under old lime-trees into a noise of waters, where the Sleins Brook, cunningly led, splashed down its falls to fill the pools in front of the house. The house itself was of flint and brick; old, comfortable and beautiful.

Mrs. Cothill received her. Mrs. Cothill was now about forty-seven years old. She was a rosy, plump woman, very exquisitely dressed in a costume copied from a Hol-bein drawing (of a lady at the Court of Henry VIII). It was of dark green and black, with jewels specially designed and made for it. The room in which she received Carrie was dark with old books and tapestries. A small hand-loom was near one of the windows, bearing a half-woven mat of green, with a commenced design of a red tulip darted at by blue birds. A spinet was open near another window; on it was an old book of the music of Couperin. There were three big and beautiful bowls of rose-pourri. Over the fire was a portrait of Mrs. Cothill

(holding a lily), being languorous in black velvet upon a sofa of green. On the wall was a portrait of Mrs. Cothill (holding a rose between her lips), being languorous in green velvet upon a sofa of black. The tables and book-cases contained many hand-printed books from modern presses. When she rose to receive Carrie, Mrs. Cothill was at a scribe's desk near the window, copying out a page of the "Imitatio" in black upon purple vellum.

"Ah, come to the fire, Carrie," she said. "You must be cold after your drive."

Carrie was not cold. She loved fresh air and had a very good circulation. She found the room stuffy and the air heavy with perfume, for Mrs. Cothill had been burning gums in a brazier.

"I wonder if you have been to the Old Masters yet?" Mrs. Cothill asked.

"No, I haven't heard of them," Carrie said. "Have they taken a house here?"

"No. I meant the old Master-Painters. There is an exhibition at Burlington House. Some of the paintings are reproduced here." She showed an illustrated catalogue.

"No, I haven't been to it," Carrie said. "Is it very good?"

"It is rather dominated by the Cinque Cento," Mrs. Cothill said. "But perhaps you care for the Cinque Cento?"

"I'm afraid I don't know quite what it is," Carrie said.

"Oh, it's a period of art. Some people prefer it. But I like something much more primitif. Have you seen my primitif, by the way? Now that I have had to give up my

London house I have had to bring my things here. Perhaps you have not seen it."

Carrie was not sure what a primitif might be; she supposed that it was proper. "I don't think I have seen it," she said. "In fact, I am sure I haven't."

"I have it here now," Mrs. Cothill said, going to the wall and pulling aside a screen of tapestry. She displayed an oblong panel which had once been the left wing of an altar-piece: parts of the iron hinge were still secured to it. On a background of gold that had browned, an angular bony saint, "coming half out of his sackcloth at both ends," Carrie thought, was gazing upward to his left. Carrie did not know what to say, so she said, "Who is it?"

"We think it's Lorenzo Braccianino," Mrs. Cothill said. "At least, we are inventing a personality to explain the presence of this and other masterpieces. The right-hand wing of this triptych is at The Hermitage, ascribed to Domenichino Aldobrandini."

Carrie could not think what to say. She continued to gaze, wondering whether Mrs. Cothill meant the saint or the painter.

"Don't you think he's rather a darling?" Mrs. Cothill said.

"It is very primitif, isn't it?" Carrie said.

"Oh, to recapture the primrose soul," Mrs. Cothill said. "To have lived in a little hill town in Italy, with this Spring of the Spirit everywhere about one."

"I'd rather be alive now, and here," Carrie said. "After all, we do know more about things."

"In actual knowledge, perhaps yes," Mrs. Cothill said. "But knowledge is what I call bee-instinct, or ant-instinct.

It has nothing to do with the butterfly-instinct, which is the soul of flying."

"No, I suppose it hasn't," Carrie said. "But all the same it has to do with living people: they can nearly fly, in trains and steamers; and people do live more decent lives; and live longer."

"Oh, there are drains," Mrs. Cothill said, "and people can travel fast. They may live longer, and go quicker, but what fruits are they leaving? My primitif was painted six hundred years ago. What are we producing that people will want to look at six hundred years hence?"

"I don't think that that's a fair question," Carrie said. "No one can answer for six hundred years hence. Probably we are making some good things that will abide. We are doing the things of our Time, which is unlike any other, and therefore unique and precious. And then, don't you think that the things that survive do so by such accident? Tastes change so, one never can guess what will be destroyed. Who could have foretold that the tight sleeve would be destroyed?"

"Ah," Mrs. Cothill said, "I'm afraid I do not follow modern fashions. They do not interest me. I look forward to the day when women will count it a disgrace not to spin their own yarn, weave their own cloth, make their own clothes, and embroider their own designs."

"That wouldn't leave much time for gardening," Carrie said. Mrs. Cothill, who was an indoor plant, agreed.

"Shall we go into the Bird Room?" Mrs. Cothill asked. "I believe that my son is there."

The Bird Room was so called from its decoration. It was hung about with canvas roughly embroidered with a flight of birds of imaginary but well-coloured kinds, all

wrought by the hands of Mrs. Cothill and her daughter Topsy (now married). They found Charles reading Professor McAlister on "Transmitted Characteristics in British Thoroughbred Horses." He welcomed Carrie, and suggested that she should come out to see Mamzelle.

"Oh, Charles," his mother said, "I meant to tell you about Mamzelle, but Carrie came in and that put it out of my mind. Jim let her down on the quarry track this morning and cut her knees about."

"Oh, I say," Charles said. "What on earth was Jim thinking of?"

"As usual, he can't think how it happened. He was dreaming, I suppose."

"Well, that rules out Mamzelle, Carrie, I'm afraid. I was going to lend Mamzelle to Carrie, Mother, for the Cock-and-Pye next week."

"She's quite badly cut," Mrs. Cothill said. "She won't be presentable by then."

"That brings us down to Tradoodle, Carrie," Charles said. "If you will come along to the stables with me, we'll see the cut knees, and you can look at Tradoodle."

"But, Charles," his mother said, "didn't you promise Tradoodle to Emmy for next week?"

"Emmy Crowthorne? Dash it, yes, I forgot. She's going to be here, isn't she?"

"She's here," Mrs. Cothill said. "She's out at the stables now."

"Well, that rules out Tradoodle, too, Carrie," Charles said. "I'm most awfully sorry. Shall we go along to see these knees?"

Carrie went with him. Mrs. Cothill was not dressed for stable-visiting.

In the stable they found Emmy Crowthorne leaving Mamzelle's loose box. "I've been vetting your mare, Charles," she said. "She's been down among the flints. I'm afraid it's knocked a pony off her. I'm afraid I can't shake hands; I'm a bit vetty."

Jim, who had done the deed, was out of the way; but the head groom was there.

"How are the cuts?" Charles asked.

"They're nasty cuts, sir," the groom said. "But the young lady vetted them beautifully; just as good as Dr. Gubbins could."

"You always were rather better than a vet, Emmy," Charles said.

"I like horses," she said. "And when they're ill I know that they're not getting people into trouble."

"This one will be," Charles said, thinking of Jim.

They looked at Tradoodle, who was not exactly a lady's horse. Emmy, however, knew him of old. "Doodles, dear," she said, producing some sugar for him, "you're rather a devil, but rather a darling. There are one or two things he simply won't stand. He gave me a 'tec's clutch once on the arm for coming up behind him in the paddock. I really thought he was going to shake me."

"You never told me that," Charles said.

"It was only his way of saying please approach me from the front."

They looked at Charles's black horse, which he was to ride in the point-to-point. Carrie said, "Oh, what a perfect beauty."

Emmy, whose father had ruined himself with a racing stable, had too shrewd an eye for a horse's weak points.

"What do you think, Emmy?" Charles asked. She shook her head.

"There's something wanting behind the girths," she said. "He's a picture in front, of course. I'd rather have Doodles, though he did pick me up and drop me." She passed her hand over the horse's loins. "I'm sorry, Charles," she said, "but I think Mr. Manor's Irish hunter will beat you, if he's properly ridden."

"There's never any jam about your powders," Charles said. "I think I shall beat Bunny's horse, all the same. Now let us come along in to lunch."

The dining-room of the Sleins was a long, panelled room, hung with small tapestries representing briar-roses. The table-service was of green glass and green earthenware.

"And how is your garden, Carrie?" Mrs. Cothill asked. "In this open winter I suppose all sorts of things are sprouting."

"Yes, worse luck," Carrie said. "They'll be nipped later on. I picked enough green hawthorn-bud, in one sheltered spot yesterday, to fill a little sandwich. But the new tennis-court has been taking most of my time; that and the new borders near it, which I want to make gay for the summer."

"I don't know much about flowers," Mrs. Cothill said. "I suppose this isn't quite the season for transplanting; but perhaps we've got some things, haven't we, Charles? Pottcias and Zettsias, and that kind of thing?"

"I believe you've had all that will transplant from here, Carrie," Charles said.

"If you're making a border, Miss Harridew," Emmy said; "would you care to have some loganberry plants

later on, to train into a hedge at the back? They're rather rude, untidy growers, but they make a summer hedge; and the fruit makes delicious jam."

"I should love to have some, thank you," Carrie said.

"I expect you want a flower-border," Emmy said. "I'm afraid I can't help you much with flowers. I grow nothing but fruit of different kinds, and a little clover for the bees. Jam, fruit and honey are my occupation."

"Very good occupation, too, Emmy," Mrs. Cothill said. "Your crab-apple and rowan-berry jelly. . . . I always think it has the wildness of something ancient British. I do wish that I could persuade you, Emmy, to distil, so that I could have lovely elder-flower-water, and Good King Harry's Balm."

"What is Good King Harry's Balm?" Carrie asked.

"Oh, it's an unguent," Mrs. Cothill said. "You read of it in the Herbals. It is made of violets and new milk and honey. It is said to be good for broken hearts and weakness of the eyes."

"I'm afraid it wasn't any good, Mrs. Cothill," Emmy said. "It has fallen out of use. And who was the Good King Harry?"

"Harry the Sixth," Charles said.

"But I thought he was mad."

"That's what you call the good when they're unsuccessful."

"I want you presently, Emmy, to give me all sorts of advice about my Dye Garden," Mrs. Cothill said. "I want this year to dye from woad and madder, as well as from willowshoots."

"I'm afraid they're rather beyond me," Emmy said.

"But I'm sure to have something in print about them, somewhere."

"I don't believe the Britons dyed themselves with woad," Charles said; "I believe they tattooed themselves."

"I believe they painted," Emmy said. "Against a good brown skin, all tanned with the wind and the sun, a blue design looks beautiful. It probably lasted a week or two, as people did not wash, and then you had in the local R.A. and had a new design done."

"I do long to be dyeing my linens," Mrs. Cothill said. "To spin it all, dip it all, and then weave it all. And I think one ought to begin with woad, don't you? since that is the first recorded British colour—'Woaded Boadicea, urging her scythe-wheeled chariot.' You don't practise any handicraft, do you, Carrie?"

"I don't do anything well, except dig," Carrie said. "Old Morgan, our gardener, says that I can dig a one-spit almost as good as a boy. He said he'd give me eighteenpence a week for it any day, especially if it were a slack season."

"How about riding? You can ride," Charles said.

"I couldn't earn a living at it," Carrie said. "I couldn't jump through hoops or do a step-dance on the crupper."

"How do you pass your days without a handicraft?" Mrs. Cothill asked.

"I dig," Carrie said. "When I'm not district-visiting, or giving Sunday School lessons, or practising some new songs for a concert, or entertaining, I dig in the garden, or weed in the garden, or spud up plaintains, or grub up white clover from the tennis-courts. In the winter I hunt about once a fortnight, when my poor mare's legs aren't filled, and in the summer I play tennis, whenever I'm not

weeding. I'm like the old horse in Watts's picture—'A simple life of unregarded toil.' "

"I wish you would let me teach you how to weave," Mrs. Cothill said.

"Don't you let my mother make you a weaver, Carrie," Charles said. "Revolution and heresy begin in weaving. Half the fanatics who ever got themselves burned or sawn in two were weavers. They always want to convert people, just as my mother does."

"I should love to learn how to weave, Mrs. Cothill," Carrie said, "I've no doubt that it's much too exciting and thrilling a craft for men."

"It is," Mrs. Cothill said. "Often, even when I'm weaving plain cloth, I have to leave the loom and dance round the weaving-room from the sheer excitement of it."

"When men reach that pitch of excitement they begin to smash things," Charles said.

"But don't you come up against a very widely spread feeling?" Carrie asked. "I am always meeting it in the village: 'Let them do it that does it.' Shouldn't I be interfering with the weavers who weave for a living?"

"There aren't any," Mrs. Cothill said. "The hand-looms are gone. And the sooner the power-looms follow them, so that the hand-looms may come back, the better."

"Do you think that all the weavers who used to weave enjoyed it as much as you do, Mrs. Cothill?" Carrie asked. "Because if they did, I can't see how they came to give it up."

"They were squeezed out by the power-looms," Mrs. Cothill said. "They could no longer make their livings at it."

"But didn't the machines make it possible for a great

many more people to have woven stuffs?" Carrie said. "Weren't the world's populations increasing beyond the powers of the hand-weavers to supply them? I have only once seen weavers at work upon a hand-loom. They were a Persian family at an exhibition, weaving a Persian rug, with little children of five or six all helping. They seemed to be doing the work well, but they didn't seem to be enjoying it; and they seemed to be only just making a living at it, while they worked from daylight till dark."

"I doubt if any one over thirty can really enjoy work," Charles said, "unless he or she has ample private means."

"What do you mean by that, Charles?" Mrs. Cothill said. "I love work."

"You have private means," her son said, "and were never sent up to the collar. I love work, for there are things I want to do, and work is the preparation for them. Boys and youths love work (sometimes), it's a chance to show their strength. The rest is all Duty that forms Habits. How to get work done without injustice is the problem. In the case of weaving, I should think the power-loom, with limited hours of work for the weaver (and jolly good pay), is the best solution yet."

"The power-loom, Charles!" his mother said. "But how can a power-loom weaver enjoy his work?"

"He hasn't got private means, and can't," Charles said. "But he has a sense of Duty, and weaving has become a Habit, so he goes on. Probably he only weaves with about a tenth of his brain, and with the other nine-tenths does mental arithmetic, or considers astronomical truth, or the dates of Kings. I daresay the system could be improved."

"Don't you think, Mrs. Cothill," Emmy said, "don't

you think that the existing thing—in this case the powerloom—is always the concern of the present; and living persons' sense of its deficiencies is the hope of the future?"

"Perhaps I care too much for the past," Mrs. Cothill said, "to be very tender to the present that defiles it."

"I suppose all progress is a going back to something that has been in the past," Carrie said.

"I don't recognize progress," Charles said. "Life is always changing and men are often experimenting. People and states grow and decline. I call that change, not progression."

"I call it change, not progression," Mrs. Cothill said, "when we give up the ideals of the Middle Ages for the spiritual prides and apathies of the Renaissance."

"You can't bring back the Middle Ages," Charles said. "You are lapped in the spiritual prides and apathies of a much better time; you're exceedingly comfortable, and are just going to buy a Rossetti drawing. Why complain?"

"It isn't a very good drawing," she said, "but it's the best I shall ever be able to afford." She had the feeling that she had been somewhat mauled, and that Emmy, not Carrie, most certainly not Carrie, was the wife for her son. She gave them coffee and a liqueur which she had made of old brandy, mint, honey and crushed carraways. After this, Emmy asked her if she would play to them on the spinet. She played to them some pretty things (with sprightly names) by Couperin; after which Emmy fetched her recorder and piped to them some old English dance tunes, "Old Mole," "Hey Boys," "Lads a Bunchum," the Horn Dance, and others. After these Carrie was asked to sing, which she did, in her sweet little well-trained voice.

She sang a song about "the stream of Time," which had to do with love somewhere or other, and a second song about willow-trees dreaming, which had to do with love in a row-boat. After these songs it was time for her to go: Emmy and Charles went out to see her off, while Mrs. Cothill went back to her loom to put in another blue bird darting at the tulip. "Decidedly," she thought, "I will not invite Miss Harridew to come to learn how to weave with me."

"Well, Carrie," Jane said, "and how did you enjoy your day?"

"Not very much," Carrie said. "Charles is rather flip-pant when he isn't rather horsey; and then I never feel that Mrs. Cothill is quite real. She is always getting into some fiction or other to escape from what she thinks is the world, but is probably only her liver."

"It's a very beautiful house," Jane said. "I haven't been there recently; but it is very beautiful, and full of beautiful things."

"That's one of the drawbacks," Carrie said. "It's a sort of mediæval house, which is always forcing her to be mediæval. And the things may be very beautiful, but they seem like toys in a game. She always seems to be saying, 'Come to see me play my new game of Middle Ages.' I should hate to live in a place like that."

"There is the farm," Jane said. "That is real enough. Did you see Charles's Alderneys and the thoroughbred mares?"

"No, I didn't," Carrie said; "only the stables. But farms don't interest me, Janey dear. I see too many of them here; and I hate their mess, and the rough men and women, the gallon of cider a day, and all the unmarried

mothers, and all that life among the beasts. I'm an ungrateful girl, Janey. I don't like the past, and I don't like the present in the country. The country has no present. As Nick was saying the other day, 'All the countryside is still in the eighteenth century. The real life of England is now in the towns.' "

"Nick Childrey said that?" Janey said. "I don't feel that Nick Childrey, who is a town bird, a city business man, of Nature, is quite detached enough to judge. Personally, I see few marks of life in the towns, but many marks of mess, as well as plenty of unmarried mothers. However, there is the bell for tea; we must go."

While they were at tea a maid brought Carrie word that Mr. Catlington would like to speak with her in the sitting-room.

"Bring him in to tea," Carrie said.

"Please, Miss Carrie, I asked him if he would," the maid said. "But he said he couldn't stay to tea, and if you could come he wouldn't keep you a minute."

"What does the fellow want, coming here at this time, if he won't come in to tea?" the old man growled.

"I'll go to him," Carrie said. "I expect it's about those diphtheria cases in the Outer Hope; he promised to let me know."

"It's not about those," Jane said, "for he told me about those this morning. There's no fresh case, and they're all recovering."

Carrie went to the sitting-room expecting to hear of some new horror out at the Hope, probably a wife-murder or a Saturday afternoon frolic ending in a homicide, which would leave somebody desolate. However, this time Catlington was not thinking of others.

"Won't you come along to tea with us, Mr. Catlington?" she asked.

"No, I thank you," he said, in a good deal of agitation. "The refreshment I seek is not of that sort."

As he would not sit at her invitation, she remained standing. "Is anybody hurt out at the Hope?" she asked.

"They are as they have ever been," he said; "mortals in dire need, and not yet knowing thereof. What I have to say is not about them." He was in great anguish of mind; his brow was dripping with perspiration, he breathed hard and spoke with difficulty. He kept clenching his hands into his sleeves, or into the bosom of his coat, and was continually licking his lips to moisten them. She had heard that he was like this after composing a sermon, and after preaching. As it was Saturday, she thought that his sermon may have been the cause.

"Miss Carridew," he said, stumbling on her name, "Harrie, which is the name I call you before God. I have long wrestled with this, which is too strong for me, not seeing my way, even as in a glass darkly. I have nothing to offer; no, though in the real sense I have all things. But it may be that by the mercy of God you may be drawn, you may be changed, you may be lit."

She had no wish to be any of the three, but pitied his tongue-tied distress. She feared what was coming and longed, as she so often longed, for Jane to be there. "Mr. Catlington," she said gently, "I'm afraid I know what it is that you wish to say to me. You must not say it. But believe me, I am very deeply sorry for you."

"You do not know," he groaned, "you cannot know what it is that I wish to say. What I would say is nothing of the creature, though the creature calls; for I am

carnal, carnal, though I macerate daily. Oh, Harrie, I often sleep on gorse or in thorn-hedge-clip to annul the Adam in me, yet I am sadly carnal."

He did not look it, standing there white and sweating, with his mouth drawn, snapping and licking, and his eyes burning in his head. He looked like a soul come to the stake, resolved to testify.

"Carrie," he said, very gently, in a still, small voice which came from the heart of the whirlwind. "There is no peace for any, save in doing the Will of God. *In la Sua Voluntade e la nostra pace*. What I am is nothing, what I have is less than nothing; only, if the Spirit were to touch you, that you could be by me, working with me, among these poor chosen, it would be as the shadow of a rock in a weary land. If you could be my helper, for Christ's sake and for their sake, not in any way for mine, O my beloved, it would be life, life to me." Here he fell upon his knees and prayed as Carrie had seen no one pray since she was last in Italy. "If it be Thy will," he prayed, "so light, so turn, so draw the spirit of this beloved woman, that she may be Thine beside Thy servant."

"Ah, no, no, Mr. Catlington," Carrie said. "You must not pray for these things for me; indeed, please, please do not."

As she had feared might happen, the door opened as she finished speaking. Her father entered, mopping his mouth with his handkerchief ("cleaning up for a bellow" was her phrase for it), as was his way when interrupted. He strode into the room, surveying the kneeling figure. "What blasphemous mummery is this, sir?" he asked. "May I ask what decency and taste there is, in behaving thus before a lady?"

"Mr. Collidew," Mr. Catlington said, rising from his knees; "I have long struggled with the feeling, but I love your daughter and love will out."

"Love my daughter," the old bull began. "And whose leave have you to love my daughter?"

"I ask no man's leave to love whatsoever is pure and whatsoever is lovely. I love her as the symbol of things that my Creator bade me love, through the mouth of one of His chosen."

"You do, do you?" the old man said. "Carrie, leave the room."

"No, Father," Carrie said, "Mr. Catlington is speaking to me from feelings so deep that they have to be considered."

"The only feelings I'm going to have considered here," he answered, "are yours. Now, Mr. Catlington, you say you love my daughter. What position do you offer her?"

"I do not value earthly position," he said.

"Very likely not, others do," the old man answered. "What means have you for the support of a wife?"

"Means do not fail a believer," Catlington said.

"And you come here to offer your nothing and your naught to my daughter, do you?"

Carrie was watching her father. She knew that what she called his gills turned purple before an explosion. They were now scarlet; the burst being still about two speeches away.

"I offer nothing to your daughter, sir," Mr. Catlington said; "knowing my nothingness, I would not. I only prayed that she might be as a helper beside me in the work to which the Spirit of God has turned me."

"My thundering God!" the Squire cried. "Of all the

infamies I ever heard, this is about the foulest. To ask a lady to come and hold hands in a brick Bethel's tinker's séance."

"Please, Father," Carrie said, putting her hand upon her father's arm. "I understand what Mr. Catlington means, and I reverence him for thinking that I might be what he thinks. No, Father, this is my funeral. This is my pidgin, none of yours at all." She thrust her father aside. "Mr. Catlington," she went on, "I shall always be grateful, and I hope humble, when I think of what you have thought and hoped of me; but, indeed, I could never, never be anything of either. I'm very worldly and very frivolous. Some day you will see that. Put me from your thoughts. My sister Jane will visit my people in the Hope. You must not come here again, but here's my hand. We'll shake hands, clean potato, and be good friends."

He was too badly stunned to understand all that she had said. He took her offered hand in his limp, boneless hand that always seemed to go into nothing in any hand that shook it. She had feared that he would kiss it or retain it, thereby goading her father to violence. He took it and dropped it, as a dog will drop an offered pebble, finding it not a bone.

"I pray that God may bless you," he said. He gathered himself up with dignity, bowed to her father, and said "Good evening, sir." He then strode out into the hall, gathered his woebegone felt hat, and went swiftly from the house.

Jane appeared in the hall in the passage leading to the kitchen; she had the old silver teapot in her hand. Her love for Carrie always made her helpful when help was needed. "I've made some fresh tea," she said. "Now

come along to the fire and let's enjoy it." She had a shrewd surmise of almost all, but acted as though nothing had happened. Carrie was distressed and silent; her father glowered with his back to the fire, mumbling the now cold buttered toast.

"Jane," he said at last, "if that Arinian or Socian or whatever the fellow's creed is, comes here again, he is to be shown in to me. Please let all the maids know that."

Life followed its course until about three o'clock in the next afternoon, when the Squire was asleep on the sofa in his little office, in that Sunday nap which it was heresy to doubt and damnation to deny. Lou was out with her lover and her dog, rousing the water-rats in the Yell; Jane was in her room looking out clothes for some unfortunate; Carrie was enjoying a cigarette by the sitting-room fire, wishing that she had Mamzelle to ride in the coming Cock-and-Pye Day. She was aware that someone came along the drive and in at the front door. She thought that it was Sandy come back for a stick, or a camera, or an umbrella. Even when the sitting-room door opened, she took it for granted that it was Sandy. She did not turn her head, only leaned negligently towards the fire, flicked the ash from her cigarette, and said, "Sandy, these cigarettes of yours would corrupt any young woman."

"Miss Harridew," a voice said.

She leaped round and up to her feet, for there was Catlington shut up in the room with her; he was still near the door: she did not expect him to stay there. She was near a bell-pull. Unfortunately, like most of the bell-pulls in that house, it was not connected to a bell; the belfry had long since fallen out of the plaster in the

kitchen passage, and never been restored. There were the brass fire-tools ready to hand. She was a brave young woman: against her bravery came two thoughts, that Catlington was mad, and that if her father found him there might be bloodshed.

Scared as she was for the moment, she gathered herself together with a pang of pity for the poor man, who was in every way more ghastly and more awful than he had been the day before. His long black clerical coat clung about him as though it were sodden. His trousers showed plainly that he had been ranging the Hope from its eastern end, where the mud was pale, to its western end, where it was red. He had not shaved that morning; the blueness of his jaws was stubbled over. He had no hat. He must have lost it, she thought, in getting through a thicket in the Hope, for his brow was smeared with green and black and with blood from scratches. His eyes were like coals of fire; every other thing about him made him look like an ill-kept corpse which has been rained upon. The one good thing about him was that he had not much more energy.

"Miss Harridew," he said, "I have not eaten since we met, nor rested. Natheless, I wrestled in prayer for my flock, and spoke a word to them this Christ's day. The devil tempted me: I was sore driven: and I fell yesterday. Yea, I lied, I denied my longing, thinking to cloak it in a fine name."

"Mr. Catlington," Carrie said, "you must not stay here, speaking to me: my father has forbidden me to receive you. I have, besides, told you not to come here. Will you please, therefore, go? I cannot speak to you. Please do not force me to extremes."

"There are not many extremes that I can regard," he said sadly. "I lied yesterday, to myself, and to you, and to my God."

"I am sure you didn't," Carrie said. "But whether or no, I cannot discuss it. Please leave me. Don't make me angry with you."

"I cloaked it in a fine name," Mr. Catlington said. "I asked that you might be a helper beside me in that poor vineyard of Christ's, the outcasts of the Hope. What was that but a lie and an ensnaring? Be not deceived, God was not mocked. Now therefore I come to declare the truth. I am a carnal man, with all the lusts of the natural Adam warring against my soul continually. That which I asked of you, and for you, was the very least of the desires of my heart, which were carnal always to the depth. It was you as my wife that I desired. No matter my calling and election; you were my lust. No matter the nothingness of my having, and the dishonour of my plea, it was you that I wanted; to be beside me. Yes, to help my toiling; yes, but to gratify the Adam in me, not the Christ: there was the truth." He stopped here, choking with sobs. Carrie could not speak, for his sobs strangled her, too.

"Carrie," he said, thumping himself suddenly upon his chest and wincing at the blow; "I have macerated this flesh that it can now tell truth. I have filled my shirt with gorse and lain upon it: the thorns sting me as I speak. I only wanted you to know what I wanted, and how I lied. Know, too, that I am ashamed:

And from the book of honour razèd 'foiled quite.'

You shall have no trouble from me. Natheless, I shall

have trouble, exceeding trouble. O God, 'Thy judgments are a great deep.' " Here he stopped again. He had not ceased to glare upon her all this time, though keeping all the length of the room from her. "I shall not enter this room again," he said, "nor willingly (God helping) look again upon your flesh, and the thought of you I will sear out of my heart with the acids and irons of agonized repentance through years of torment. You will go your path, which is not Christ's, untouched of the eternal. I shall go mine, among the hovels of the Hope, in the bestiality of my heart. I think if you should die it would kill me."

At this, with the tears running from his eyes, he hurried out of the room, closing the door gently behind him, closing the outer door, and so away along the drive and over the fence to the wilderness of the Outer Hope.

Half an hour after this scene, when Carrie had somewhat recovered, the door again opened; Vaughan entered. She was startled, for she had heard no bell, nor any maid going to the door. "Don't be surprised," he said, "I knew you'd be here, so I let myself in. Is that so very wrong?"

"It isn't usual," she said. "I'll just let my sister know that you are here."

"No, thank you," he said. "Or at least, not for one second. Answer me one thing first. Are you going to be out on the Cock-and-Pye Day?"

"I've got nothing to ride," she said.

"Just what I hoped," he said. "Then will you let me send on Mistinga for you? She's a thorough lady's mare and safe conveyance, and I'm sure you'll like her."

"No, thank you, Mr. Vaughan," she said. "It's very

kind of you to offer her, but I won't ride Mistinga, thank you."

"Why ever not?"

"No, thank you."

"No thank you is no answer," he said. "What reason have you for refusing me? You must give me a reason."

"There is surely no must in the case," she said.

"Oh, yes there is; a very good must. Why won't you take my mare?"

"For a very good reason," she said.

"Let me know what it is, then, so that I may judge whether it is good. What is your reason?"

"A woman's reason," she said.

"What woman's reason?" he asked.

"Mine."

"Come on, now," he said. "Don't keep fencing with me, for it won't serve. Why will you not take my mare?"

"Because I won't."

"Oh, because you won't; so now we know. Well, why won't you? What's wrong with Mistinga?"

"Nothing, that I know. I've no doubt she's all that a mare ought to be."

"She's a jolly fine little thoroughbred. Well, if you don't like Mistinga, and she may not be for everybody, though you've never seen her before, let me send on Cockyolly for you. You know my chestnut, Cockyolly?"

"I do, Mr. Vaughan, but I will not borrow him, thank you."

"You've got a will of your own, my little Carrie."

"Kindly do not call me that," she said.

"What? Not my little Carrie? I jolly well shall, though. And what's more, I'll sing it, too."

He was between her and the door. He was standing with his left hand on the table, fronting her, filling all the space by which she could reach the door. She stood fronting him, with one knee on the sofa. She was indignant, but she liked his cheek and his handsome, devil-may-care look: there was a flavour of the Pit about him that gave relish to him. "I'll sing it," he repeated.

She did not want to smile, but somehow a half-smile was teased out of her by his cheek as he began:

"My lovely little Carrie,
It's her I want to marry,
Because she is more lovely than a rose.
But she will not let me bring her
My little mare Mistinga,
But stamps me with her pretty little toes."

"I don't do anything of the sort," she said.

"You do, Carrie," he said; "you stamp upon me and I am crushed."

"Crushed people will ring the bell and ask if they may be received; or so I hope," Carrie said, "when next they venture to call here. You are not on such terms here as to permit yourself such liberties."

"I came to offer you my best horse and mare."

"I am grateful, but cannot accept either, Mr. Vaughan, as I have now explained to you."

"You've explained nothing, my little Carrie," he said. "You have been wilful, and a little cold, and altogether lovely, but not in the least explanatory. Why won't you take my horse?"

"I will not."

"You would have taken young Cothill's horse, though, wouldn't you? Am I less in favour than he?"

"Mr. Vaughan, you have badgered me with enough questions, which you must have seen are distasteful. Will you please open the door for me?"

"No, I will not," he said, "because Jane will be down in a minute, on her way to the Rectory. It's her Sunday there, isn't it? You see how I know all about it. I've timed it all to a fraction because I've got something to say to you. I love you from the least little golden curl to your little pink toe-nails."

"Mr. Vaughan, that is enough; now let me pass. Open the door."

"Oh, temper, temper," he said. "See how an angry blush becomes that cheek."

"Are you going to let me pass?" she asked.

"No, I'm not," he said.

There was a silver-handled ivory paper-knife on the table, within her reach. It was perhaps fifteen inches long and of a good weight; she picked it up with a sudden certainty. It was useless as a weapon, and only provoked him. It gave him an excuse for snatching her wrist.

"No, come, my Carrie," he said, "you can't stab a chap, not brain him with a paper-knife. And what lovely skin you have."

"If I scream, my father will come; he'll kill you," she said, as she struggled to get free.

"You won't scream," he said: "you like being held, really. You like a master; like it as much as I like holding you. By George, you are a beauty; and you're going to be mine, Carrie; do you hear?"

"I'm not, you beast," she said. "Oh, do let me go."

"I'll let you go presently," he said, "when you begin to realize who's the master." He caught her other

wrist. The door was opened wide behind him by the maid.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Carrie," the maid said. "Mr. Harridew said to lay the tea in here as he'd got the papers out in the other room."

"And here's Miss Harridew," Vaughan said, as Jane appeared in the hall. "Good afternoon, Miss Harridew. I've got a trap down at the lodge. Can I give you a lift anywhere?"

Jane was not wearing her glasses: she had seen nothing; nor did she notice Carrie, who had slipped from her sight, choking down tears of mortification. "Thank you, Mr. Vaughan," Jane said. "If you could leave me at the Rectory I should be much obliged. Have you been to see Carrie?"

"I just looked in for a moment," he said, as he walked with her down the drive, "to offer my mare for the Cock-and-Pye Day."

"I think she has been lent a horse," Jane said, "for that day. I believe Charles Cothill promised her his little brown mare."

"Don't let her take her," Vaughan said. "That mare of Cothill's is a little beast: no more mouth than a pair of tongs, and must have some defect in her near eye, if she isn't actually blind in it."

"Really?" Jane said. "I thought that Charles Cothill was much too good a horseman for that kind of thing."

"If that's the mare I tried," Vaughan said, "and I'm sure it is, you'll find that I've understated it. She's got speed enough; but over a country she's a death-trap."

CHAPTER VIII

GEORGE looked out some picture-books for the sick child at the Bince: they were those which had been at the Bartons during his own childhood; books with designs by Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott; some old *Punches* and tattered copies of *Little Folks*, all more or less defaced by himself and his two brothers. He sent them over by Frank, and received a note of thanks, in a singularly beautiful hand, from Maid Margaret. He did not know anything about handwriting, but felt that this was an unusual hand. "There's something very unusual about that woman, altogether," he thought.

He could not find anyone to help him with advice about the artist. "What, young Tom Clench?" young Frome said. "Yes, he draws, but all children draw more or less. It passes out of them as they get older. It's much better to leave that kind of fellow in the state that Nature designed him for. He'll have to go back to it. It's no kindness to drag him out of it, persuading him that he's a genius; this art phase will soon pass. Some of the secretions of growth affect the brain in this way for a year or two, but it won't last."

"I think it will last," George said. "It has lasted. Besides, it's an original thing; he catches the movement of the things."

Frome was not interested. "What's the good of it?" he said. "Tom Clench and his sister ought never to have been born. His mother married her cousin, who was an

absolute wreck; so the girl is an epilept and the son is an artist: Nature's danger-signals."

"The father and mother are both dead?" George asked.

"Yes. And that half-sister of theirs, old Harridew's slip, has to pass her days rearing the two mistakes. Now she might have done some good to art as an artist's model."

"She strikes me as a fine person," George said.

"She may be," Frome said. "I take the Harridew side in that matter. I don't feel that she is very delicate, when she comes to the market here to sell brushes, when her father and half-sisters are living at the Manor."

"I'm not much judge of delicacy," George said. "I should have thought that the delicate thing would be for them to have her at the Manor."

"That would be nice for the girls, wouldn't it?" Frome said, "to have their father's bastard sleeping in their mother's room."

"Their father's child has a place there, surely," George said.

George asked the parson for advice. "What, art,—that boy at the Bince? I've heard of him, I've never seen him," the parson said. "I don't think, from what I've heard, that there's much opening for that kind of thing. To tell the truth, there's a great deal too much of that kind of thing. It's very unsettling to young people; encourages wild ideas in them."

"There's nothing unsettled about this lad," George said. "He wants to work at it."

"I can't get away from the feeling that a cobbler ought to stick to his last," the parson said. "He's happier in the long run, if he does."

"Yes, but this case is one of a born cobbler not knowing how to get to a last (whatever a last may be)," George said.

"It's not a thing that I should encourage," the parson said. "There was a young fellow beyond the Hope last year, a house-painter, who went to sea to learn how to paint ships. It only led to his death. So often, too, the early promise goes, and nothing is left but disillusion. The boy would be happier in later life, if he stuck to his brush-making. He could keep drawing for a hobby, of course."

"There's something unusual about this boy's drawings," George said. "I don't know anything about art, but I do know a little about birds and animals. I think the boy's a bit of a genius."

"I did know of an unhappy case," the clergyman said, "of a boy who felt that he had a gift. He went to London, where he starved, of course. The only employment he ever found was tinting hand-coloured Christmas-cards. He wasn't a very stable character, and this hackwork was too much for his nerve; he went completely under."

"If anyone plunges into a whirlpool," George said, "he's likely to get a shaking. I'm thinking more of getting this lad guided."

"I don't know anyone here," the parson said, "who could give artistic guidance. The picture dealers at Tatchester might be able to help. They have that big shop in St. Ann's Terrace."

A very brief view of the picture dealers convinced George that they could not help; he bought a bottle of gum from them, and came away knowing that he could have bought it for 11½d. less at any stationer's.

He was near the entrance to the Cathedral Close when the thought struck him, 'Why not ask the Canon, Ethelberta's father? He would probably know.'

He went into the cathedral, where for sixpence he got from a singularly evil old verger the name of the Canon whose son had lately gone to Greece. The Canon's house was in the Close; George went there.

"Art, Mr. Childrey?" the Canon said. "No, my son has had no artistic training whatever, except drawing the usual cone and cube. But if, as you say, you are anxious to guide this boy, let me beg you (as one who has had experience), let me beg you to hesitate before you encourage him in ways which are so largely a self-indulgence. Believe me, Mr. Childrey, art, removed from the inspiration and discipline of religion, becomes an emotional extravagance."

George thanked him for this advice, which was sincerely meant; all the same, Tom was not likely to develop into anything like Ethelberta.

"There must be some means of launching a lad as an artist," he said. "It's an honourable career, and very hard work, and adds a lot to people's pleasure."

In the bookseller's shop in Tatchester he found an illustrated catalogue of the Year's Pictures, which contained a list of the painters' names with their addresses. He took this home with him, went through it carefully, and made a list of all the painters who had painted animals and birds; there were only seven of these. "Among the seven there must be one who will encourage the boy," he said. Looking carefully at the reproductions of their paintings, he decided the order in which they should be visited.

A few days later, when he was with the hounds near the Bince, having a woodland day with foxes that would not break, he called at the house to see Maid Margaret. A girl, whom he had not before seen, opened the door to him, and told him that Miss Clench had gone to London. Tom's voice called:

"Who is it, Ianthe? Is that you, Mr. Childrey? Won't you come in?"

George went in and sat at a table heaped with sections, frames, wire and comb-foundation. "We're getting our sections ready for the hives," Tom explained.

Ianthe seemed to be one of the family, a sweet-natured, gentle girl with a sense of fun.

"I've come really to see you, Tom," George said. "I was thinking, if you would let me, I could take some of your drawings to London to show them to artists, and then get advice from them as to what you had better do. Would you mind my doing that? Would you let me do it? I can't help thinking that one or other of the artists would be interested. On the other hand, they may not let me in, or give me the chance of showing the drawings. In that case I can't help thinking that I could take them to a place called the National Gallery, where there is probably an expert who would give advice. What do you think of my scheme? Would you like me to try?"

"It's very kind indeed of you, Mr. Childrey," Tom said. "I should think it's a wonderful scheme. But my aunt has taken my drawings to London to show them to a painter, so I'm afraid nothing can be done till she comes back. But she'll be back to-night, and then I can tell you if anything has been advised."

George wished him good luck and rode off. It was a

muggy, overcast day, threatening rain. Hounds never left covert: George left them presently and rode home.

The rain, which had been promising all day, in a moist warmth in which distant sounds came clearly, set in with drizzle at dusk. George was taking his lonely tea when Nick arrived in a hired trap from Tatchester.

"The firm asked me to see the Squire about one or two things," he said. "I thought I'd look in on you on my way. I'll have to go up again by the night mail to-night."

"Have some tea?" George said. "There's a nice little rain setting in."

"I don't take quite the countryman's view of rain," Nick said. "In town we come to regard rain as pretty much of a nuisance. What's the news with you?"

"I had a couple of days' hunting," George said. "I like that horse, Kilkenny. I've entered him for Sir Peter's race at the point-to-point."

"Do you like Bug-Jargal any better?" Nick asked.

"Not much," George said.

Nick looked at his finger-nails. "Are you going to the Cock-and-Pye?" he asked.

"Yes," George said. "I'm going to ride Kilkenny."

"I've got to be here that day," Nick said, "or at least the night before. I suppose you could put me up?"

"Yes, rather. I can practically always put you up."

"Thanks," Nick said. "I'm not at all sure that I shan't be able to filch a little hunt out of it while I'm down."

"You can have Bug-Jargal if you like."

"Thanks," Nick said. "But if I'm able to manage a hunt at all, I'll have to ride a horse of Sir Edward's, which he's sending over for me. He was so good as to say that he would value my opinion of him."

"You manage to get a good deal of fun in one way or another," George said.

"I flatter myself that I have worked my way into one or two worlds that are worth the knowing," Nick said. "By the way, are you doing much reading?"

"I?" George asked; "I read a certain amount."

"A man ought to do more than that," Nick said. "Nowadays a man is judged by his width of sympathy. Why not take a course of selective reading in topics of general interest? If you like, I'll make out a list of books for you."

"Thanks," George said. "But I've got the Encyclopædia. I'm starting it at M, so as to be in the middle at once, and reading an article on each side each day."

"I don't know that it's quite a subject for a joke," Nick said. "A certain amount of general culture parts a man from a savage. Take music, for example. You ought to cultivate your ear to recognize what is best."

"What is the best?" George asked.

"Surely that which those best qualified to judge proclaim to be the best."

"And who are those best qualified to judge?"

"Certain circles in town," Nick answered, "whose mission it is to preserve the standards. By the way, are you thinking at all of coming to town before long, before or after Easter?"

"For a stay?" George asked. "No, I've got a lot too much to do here. This land has been let slide for years."

"If I may say so," Nick answered, "you yourself have been rather let slide. A little of the polish of the town would not be at all amiss."

"Yes, and a little honest muck all over you would improve you a good deal," George said. "But a farmer

doesn't leave a farm in the spring when he has only just taken charge."

"Well, think it over," Nick said. "If you do decide to come for a little while to town, I might be able to help you to a bachelor's flat at reasonable terms, from one of my friends. After all, it is a pity not to know what is being done in the capital of one's country. By the way," he added, after a pause, "I hear you've been calling at the Bince, out by Corselaydead, and bothering about that boy who is said to draw."

"I have," George said.

"You know, I don't think I would, if I were you," Nick said.

"I'm quite sure you wouldn't," George answered.

"Perhaps," Nick said. "But remember, things get round in the country here. And it won't make you any more welcome at the Manor, or me either, for that matter, when it is known that you go there. The Manor girls are very sensitive about that woman. She is said to be their half-sister; but there's plenty of doubt in the matter."

"Not to anybody who has seen them," George said, "or taken the trouble to ask about it."

"Well, putting all that aside," Nick said, "she's a brush-maker, and the Harridew girls aren't. And the boy's the son of a regular waster and bad lot; his drawing proves it. Art is only atavism, a throwing back to savagery. You may say what you like of these painters and writers; they are all immoral. He won't thank you for anything you do for him."

"He has thanked me," George said. "Not that that matters to me. I believe that he has a gift. I know he has, for he catches things which I've often noticed myself,

but haven't seen caught by anyone. If that opinion is confirmed, I'm going to give him his chance."

"May I ask how?" Nick said.

"I'll tell you how if it comes to anything. Anyhow I'll help him to a jolly good art school, or to some painter who takes pupils."

"It's a little hard on me, I think," Nick said, "after taking endless trouble here, to have all my work chucked away."

"How chucked away?"

"The glass-house, first of all; that has been chucked away. Then, the friendship with Rosey and Rosey's mother; that, too. Now you'll embroil yourself and me with the Squire."

"All because I try to help his dead mistress's dead sister's orphan child, who has a touch of genius?"

"That is not the point, as you know," Nick said. "The point is that you do so knowing how intensely distasteful it will be to the Harridews, whom you have known ever since you were a child, remember, and who deserve and expect some consideration from you."

"I shall tell them what I do and why," George said. "Not that it can be any business of theirs. They will surely not be so unreasonable as to suppose that I do it to annoy them."

"They will perhaps be so reasonable," Nick said, "as to suppose that you do it to please their father's bastard, who is a good-looking kind of gipsy, they say, and perhaps in her mother's profession."

"Look here, Nick," George said. "Do you know anything about the photographs which the Harridews' governess used to take of us?"

"Know about them?" Nick asked. "Yes, I've got them in town. I asked the Governor for them, years ago."

"Did he give them to you?"

"No, Dick did. The Governor wanted them by him. May I take it that you'll drop this going to the Bince?"

"Drop it? No, of course I won't drop it. A whole lot of those photographs happen to be mine, so will you please send them back?"

"Certainly, if you want them," Nick said.

"I do want them."

Nick drove off to the Manor soon after this. At nine that night he sent down a note to George: it ran thus:

DEAR GEORGE:

Might I change my mind about Bug-Jargal for the Cock-and-Pye? Might I accept him for Carrie here, who has nothing to ride? She would be so very glad of the chance, and I have told her that I do not think you will raise any objection.

Yours,

N.

Perhaps you would not mind confirming the arrangement to-morrow, if, as I suppose, you have no quarrel with the scheme.

"That is just Nick's cheek to the letter," George growled as he read the note. "He lends my horse to Carrie, and gets all the credit for the thought. I was an ass not to think that she might like a mount now and then. And Bug-Jargal is a lady's horse, bought for that beast Rosey. Well, it will give me a chance to see her to-morrow, that is one good thing."

He went to the door before going to bed; it was raining hard, for the storm was fast moving before a spreading fine weather. He had not lost the sense of bliss which

possessed him when he stood alone at his own door, looking out on his possessions. "I am a lucky man," he thought; "all this is mine, by fluke and luck. I am the luckiest man in all these seven shires. My luck is going to hold, perhaps, for all this year. Perhaps Carrie will have me. This rain will be over by midnight or so, and I'll be at the Manor to-morrow with the Bug."

He was right about the weather. When he went out the next morning to see the work begun the stars were shining in a clear heaven, and the wet dead grass on the borders was touched with rime. After he had worked he took the Bug over to the Manor.

Carrie was still perturbed by the thought of Vaughan; the presence of George and the delight of the new horse cheered her. George had the joy of saddling up for her, helping her aloft, and of seeing her bright young excited face as she first felt the Bug's mouth and took charge. George opened the white gate for her; she went with a quickening pace into the cow-pasture, and there, as the black felt the pleasure of the turf beneath his feet, she sent him down the long field to the fence, over it to Tate and Brady (as the far field was called) and round through two closes to where George stood.

"Oh, George," she said, "he is a perfect darling. He goes like the wind and fences like an angel."

"He's a clever little horse," George said. "I'm glad you like him. I'm savage with myself for not offering him to you before. But now that you like him so, I do hope you'll often ride him. Nick likes him, but I'm more of a lump than Nick and need more bone. Let's go on down to your brook and see how he likes the water."

"I'm terrified of water," she said.

"You're not!" he said. "I don't believe you're terrified of any mortal thing."

"Oh, aren't I," she said. "That's all you know."

He walked beside her down the meadow.

"Now here's the brook (she said);
The Whissendine appears in view."

"I'll try it at the broad part, because the take-off is sound on that part."

"I'll run on," George said, "to see you take it. Good luck."

"Thanks," she said. "Victory, or a billowy grave. I hope I shan't go to Canossa."

He didn't know quite what she meant, but it sounded like slang for a toss. He ran down the fifty yards to the brook: it was a tiny stream, hardly a foot deep, save in the place designed as a jump, where it had been dug and stanked as a watering place for cattle. He saw her turn the Bug away, swing him round and press him at the point. Then he saw her eager, tense face rush nearer, and her smile of delight as the horse took the water in his stride. He saw her bend down to pat his neck as she steadied him; then in an instant she had swung the horse round and was rollicking back as happy as a sandboy. She larked him round the field before cantering back to George. "Oh, George, he's a perfect dear!" she said. "It is such a change to ride a real goer after my poor old mare. I shall look forward to the hunt. You don't think it will rain, do you?"

"No, it won't rain, and it won't freeze, but be delightful, warm open weather like to-day or perhaps a bit

cloudier. I suppose, Carrie, that you won't let me hunt with you?"

"Why ever not?" she said. "You lend me a horse; of course I will."

"I thought Nick would have arranged to hunt with you, or you with him."

"Nick isn't at all sure that he'll be able to hunt," she said. "But if he does hunt, I imagine he'll be tied elsewhere."

"What, has he got a girl?" George asked.

"No: I meant that he'll be with Sir Edward's people."

"Oh, is that all? I quite thought that you meant that he had got a girl."

"I know nothing about anything of that sort," she said. It seemed to him that she had become a little prickly, for an instant.

"You really ought to give this horse another name," she said.

"Whoever gave him his present name?" he asked.

"Oh, I know all about him," Carrie said. "I've known him from his infancy. Hattie named him, out at Dean Baydon, from a French novel about a black man."

"Well, you rename him, if you will; will you?" he asked. "What shall he be called henceforth?"

"What is black?" she asked.

"Day and Martin's."

"No, but what else?"

"Despair."

"Oh, do be serious, George. Tell me something that is black."

"Burnt toast is pretty black," he said; "so are funerals and top hats."

"How about Othello?" Carrie said.

"No, Othello was such an ass," he said.

"He seems a very normal sort of man, to me," Carrie said. "But if I call him that he might Desdemona me in Tuttocks Ditch, which wouldn't do at all for this bright young lady."

"It would do for you, jolly finally," he said.

"I'm very fond of night-jars," she said. "Would you like him called 'Night-Jar?' "

"Right, if you'd like that, christen him," he said.

"How do you christen a horse?"

"I saw a gipsy copper selling a pony once; and the buyer asked what the pony's name was, so the gipsy spat on his hand, and slapped it on the pony's crest and said, 'His name's Cornelia.' "

"I'm afraid my sex is debarred from christening horses."

"A lick might be permitted," he said.

"Very well, then, George," she said. She daintily licked the tender inward side of her right glove and laid it on the horse's crest. "I name thee Night-Jar," she said.

"That's more of a Christian name than he's had hitherto," George said. "I hope he'll live up to it and fly like it."

CHAPTER IX

GEORGE received a letter from Tom, who told him that a painter had liked his drawings, and that he was to draw for a couple of years at a school in London. Tom's hand, like his aunt's, was very well formed.

George rode over to the Bince to ask what the painter had said. Maid Margaret, who received him, asked him to speak in a low voice, because her niece, Annie, had been ill and was now sleeping. They muttered together.

"The painter said that Tom has something that cannot be taught," Maid Margaret whispered; "and that he ought to give up everything for it."

"Just what I felt," George answered.

"So he will go to London after Easter," Maid Margaret continued. "As soon as the new term begins."

"What will you do without him?"

"I shall miss him," she said, "but I know that he has a special talent, and that it would be a sin not to make the most of it."

"Will you forgive me if I say that I shall be proud to help, if any help be needed?"

"Thank you, Mr. Childrey, but there will be no need."

"You must forgive my mentioning it, then. I believe in the boy's gift and would like to show that I do."

"You have already shown that, Mr. Childrey; more kindly and more thoroughly than anybody. You have been a great encouragement to him."

"Well, there it is; if the need should arise, between now and the day when he has finished his training. Someone was saying that the schools in Paris are very good, and that one ought to go there after a time in London. No, I read that, in a paper. So if it should be necessary, I should be only too glad. It's a pity to spoil a good ship for a pennorth of tar."

"I have believed in Tom's talent so much," she said, "that it is a great joy to me to have it confirmed by people. My nephew and niece have only been with me since September, when their mother died."

"About Tom's handwriting and yours," he said; "you write most beautiful hands."

"It's Michael Angelo's hand, not ours," she said. "I have always been interested in handwriting and his is the script I've copied most."

"I've heard of Michael Angelo," George said. "He couldn't draw fox-hounds."

"He was one of the masters, Mr. Childrey," she said. "He could draw out the scheme of the world, all in its order and proportion, with the stars above it in their law."

CHAPTER X

AFTER her unpleasant scene with Vaughan, Carrie decided not to use the sitting-room, but to read in the drawing-room, a cold, gilt and formal room on the other side of the house. There were two doors to this room, so that, if Vaughan should surprise her by either, she would still have a way of escape to her father by the other. Some of her trouble she confided to Jane and to Louey; who agreed that they had better not tell their father, lest there should be some violence. In the meantime, Jane wrote to Vaughan, telling him not to come to the house again; she also gave orders to the maids that he was not to be admitted. She thought that this would suffice.

It sufficed for one day, during which Vaughan summed up the situation pretty shrewdly. On the second day, at five in the afternoon, when it was fast darkening, he walked to the house on the grass border, entered it by the front door, walked quietly into the drawing-room, and waited for Carrie to appear. As he very well knew, she was then at tea in the library with the others. He took the liberty of slipping the bolt in the second door, and of turning down the lamp. He knew that as Jane was in the village he had a fair chance of seeing Carrie alone.

He heard the library door open at the end of tea. Old Harridew came along the passage with Carrie, being touchily pompous about something. "I really cannot consent to take an interest in such people," he was saying,

"any more than I can understand why the authorities permit them." He went alone into his office, while Carrie slipped upstairs. Vaughan might have slipped up after her, had not Lou and Sandy come along the passage at that instant, hand in hand, humming an air from "The Gondoliers." They paused in the hall, still humming, while they helped each other to coats and sticks. Louey said:

"I shall only walk with you, young man, as long as twilight gratifies propriety."

"That's the idea, young woman," Sandy answered. "You anticipate my every wish. And that muffler goes jolly well with your coat and hat."

After that there came a draught of air into the room as the front door, on the other side of the hall, opened and closed upon the two walkers. Vaughan looked at the woman's paper which Carrie had been reading. "Nice pair of legs that little filly has," he muttered, as he gazed at an advertisement for stockings, "only they stop a lot too soon. Why the devil doesn't Carrie come down?"

He heard her step upon the stairs at that instant. He slid swiftly and silently behind the half-opened door, so that as she came into the room he was able to shut it on the instant, and to put his back to it. She gave a little cry, and darted to the other door; he darted after her and caught her arms. "No, no," he said. "No, no, my Carrie. I've bolted that little bolt-hole. I want to talk to you."

"Let me go," she said, "or I shall scream."

"You won't," he said. "It isn't ladylike to scream. But do scream. I'd love to see your little red throat all the way down. Please scream. Won't you scream?"

"Oh, do let me go."

"Certainly, I'll let you go," he said. "But first you'll promise to ride my horse."

"I will not touch your horse," she said.

"I ask you to ride him, and I mean you to ride him. He'll be sent on for you. My man will be there, you'll find. You'll have to take him. So have done with tantrums and face facts, my beauty."

At this point the door opened behind him, Lou and Sandy appeared there. Twilight had been further advanced than they had expected.

"What is the idea?" Sandy said.

"I've come to tell Carrie that I've sent on a horse to the Cock-and-Pye for her," Vaughan said.

"Is that the fact that she has to face?" Sandy asked.

"It is a matter between herself and me," Vaughan said.

"Though, of course, it's very kind of you to take an interest."

"Perhaps it is," Sandy said, "since it made you let go of her."

"Very well, then, Carrie, my dear," Vaughan said; "I'll take it as settled that you'll ride him."

"I stand in the position of brother to Miss Harridew," Sandy said. "Louey, will you take Carrie out of the room?"

"I am the mistress of this house at the moment," Louey said, "and I want to ask this person how he got in. The maids have orders not to admit him. Will you please understand that you are not wanted here in future, Mr. Vaughan, and that if you trespass here again you will be prosecuted?"

"How did you get in?" Sandy asked.

Vaughan sat himself on the end of a chintz-covered sofa, he swung a leg to and fro, looking at the three; he was a very handsome man, and reckless enough to enjoy a situation of the kind.

"Look here, Sandy," he said, "you're out of the immediate running, you're engaged. I only say to you, keep off the course and don't interfere with those who are in the running. As for you, Louey, we've sung enough duets together not to talk rot about prosecutions. I am talking privately with Carrie here, moving my suit as every man has a right to move it."

"Not every man has that right," Sandy said. "What right you may once have had you have forfeited. You are forbidden this house."

"Now, please, my young military friend," Vaughan said. "Carrie, you know perfectly well that you want to ride my horse. He's there at your service. You know perfectly well why I want to lend you my horse; because I'm at your service. You may not like the thought at first, but it is now in your mind, and there it will grow."

Carrie turned to him. "I have already refused your horse in a way that no gentleman could have misunderstood," she said. "You have now twice treated me like the cad and raff you thoroughly are. I shall tell my father all that has passed, but shall delay two minutes to let you get off the premises. I will see, to-morrow, that every man on this estate has orders to fling you out if you enter the gates again. These are the last words I shall speak to you. If you molest me more you will find that I don't lack protectors."

Vaughan rose to his feet and stretched himself. "That's fair warning," he said. "So be it. You declare war.

Well, I declare love. You'll find that I shall win. And don't prosecute future brother-in-laws, Louey and Sandy, because that's only silly. Good night, my beautiful and beloved Carrie. The horse will be there, and so shall I. Bye-bye, *mes enfants*."

With this he sauntered out, followed by Sandy, who had other things to say, to which not much consideration was given.

When the clicking of the white gate told them that Vaughan had passed into the field, the three went to the Squire and told their tale. "What is this fellow?" the Squire said; "the sort of hunting bachelor? Very well, then, I'll speak with him to-morrow. I can promise you he'll not molest you again."

The Cock-and-Pye Day dawned with mild, still, cloudy weather, with a high barometer and the weather-cock steady somewhere well to the south of west. George, who was out and about an hour before dawn, settled the question of scent by opening his mouth some thirty yards to leeward of the stable. He knew that if a flavour reached his palate from that point (as it did) it would be a good scenting day. He got the morning's work well under way, then returned to the house to shave and re-shave, and to put on new clothes for Carrie's sake.

Nick, who had come down the night before, opened his eyes (as he did when jealous or impressed) at the sight of the new coat and cords. "Who's your tailor?" he said. "I can't say I admire his cut much. Nor his hang, if it comes to that."

"Sorry you don't like it," George said.

"I don't," Nick answered. "There's only one tailor whom you can trust in these days not to turn you out like

a counter-jumper. He always does for me, very well. It isn't everybody that he'll consent to do for. I daresay if I were to give you a line to him he might consent to have you on his books; that is, if you care at all for appearance."

"I do," George said.

"I'm surprised," Nick said. "You don't look as if you did."

"And who is this tailor?" George said.

"Topps and Leathers, Old Bond Street."

"That's unfortunate," George said, "for they made these things."

"Naturally if you go to the understrapper and take whatever he chooses to send along (misfits, probably, by the look of them, for somebody else) of course you'll look like a sweep. You ought to know your man, and go direct to old Topps."

"I did," George said.

"You don't seem to have got on the right side of him," Nick said. "Probably you got on the wrong side, judging by the evidence. You ought not to talk to Topps about clothes, but about orchids."

The conversation lapsed for a while; then Nick said: "About that cottage on the Cowpats, where Isaiah Starve-all lives."

"What about it?"

"Our father put Isaiah in there, out of pity, at a shilling a week rent."

"Isaiah's ninety. He's been on the Bartons seventy years," George said. "He catches moles and things; he can't last long."

"I don't think he will," Nick said. "And I must say

I hope he won't. He's a sour old devil, always talking sedition in the pubs."

"I hope I shall have the guts to do as much when I'm ninety," George said.

"That, after all, is a matter of taste, isn't it?" Nick said. "A man like that does more harm than you imagine. Anyhow a shilling a week is an absurd rent to ask for the Cowpats. There's half an acre of land with it."

"He's my pensioner," George said. "Whatever use he has been has been used for the Bartons. It is an absurd rent, of course, and he pays it out of the money we allow him. It makes him feel independent, and gives him a grievance, which are the two things he most loves. Leave the old chap in peace."

"I had not thought of troubling his peace," Nick said; "but of having due regard to some of your property. The Cowpats is not an ordinary cottage by any means, but what you might call a choice work of art. It's an early sixteenth or very late fifteenth century half-timbered house, in a very beautiful situation up there above the brook. If you were to have it done up and added to by someone who understands that kind of thing . . . I dare say I could put you in the way of the very man . . . it would cost you four, or four-fifty, or shall we say five hundred at the very outside . . . you could let it for fifty guineas; or ten per cent on your money. Isaiah would be just as happy anywhere else; and in lodgings, remember, he'd have someone to look after him besides. He's not doing the Cowpats any good; and is quite likely to burn it down, some day."

"Yes," George said, "suppose I did up the Cowpats; who would take it?"

"People would take it with the Tuttocks shooting," Nick said; "or people would take it for the hunting."

"But, Nick, that means turning it into a country house, with stabling, and servants' quarters."

"All right," Nick said. "If that's too elaborate—lots of artistic people would take it for the week-ends."

"I won't have week-enders here," George said. "I can't abide people who can't live either in town or country, and do no good in either."

"As you please, of course," Nick said. "Only modern life tends infallibly to the suburban form; and you, as a country dweller, and landowner, ought to be alive to the possibilities of estate development. As a matter of fact, if you had cottoned to the suggestion, I would have put in for the Cowpats for myself, and put up half the money for the alterations."

"But what do you want at Cowpats, Nick? You can always come here, and your wife with you, when you have one. What on earth would you do at a place like that?"

"I have a liking for the place," Nick said.

"I'm sorry," George said; "but it won't do, Nick. The Bartons is an old estate, with cottages for the people who work it. When Isaiah dies, the Cowpats will be wanted for one of the other men, with his wife and family. All this countryside is overloaded, as it is, with people who take the houses and yet don't work the land. The men who work the land often can't get a cottage, or even a room. You know old Ebenezer, old Bill's hedger? He walks four miles to his work every day, and then four miles back at the end of it, just because the only two cottages out there are let by old Bill to week-enders. It's very hard on the men, Nick. I'm not going to start that

kind of game here. If men give the Bartons life the Bartons is going to give them lodging."

"As you please, of course," Nick said. "We'll say no more about it. But I think it's a pity that an artistic treasure like the Cowpats should be at the mercy of a drunken old man like Isaiah."

"Probably somebody very like Isaiah built it," George said. "And old Isaiah would build something not unlike it to-morrow if he got the chance. He'll no more burn it down than fly."

"After all," Nick said, "you'd have to open up the lane and put metal down. It would cost you two pounds a yard to do it permanently."

However much they had bickered at breakfast, they agreed, as they drove to the Cock-and-Pye, that it was a perfect morning for hunting; there was dry going, scent, coolness, and an almost windless air; and enough signs of spring beginning to give zest to the winter beauty. Nick dropped George at the Cock-and-Pye, and then drove on alone to a neighbouring farm where Sir Edward's horse was waiting for him. George got Kilkenny from the inn stables. As he rode out into the wide space in front of the inn, he saw Steer reined in out of the way, moodily snicking at grass-blades with his thong. He rode up to greet Steer, but found him in the pangs of despair.

"It's no good, George," he said, "'thou canst not minister to a mind diseased.' I really don't care two pence even about hunting on a day like this."

At this instant, George caught sight of the Harridew party, and rode off to greet them. Steer, seeing to whom he was going, turned his horse's head, so that he might see no more.

All the Harridews were there; Carrie on the Night-Jar looking more divinely lovely than ever; old Harridew, looking for Vaughan; and Jane on her cob, with a bundle of charities for some outlying sufferer to whom she meant to ride as hounds drew.

"Where are they drawing, George?" Jane asked.

"Ghost Heath, I think," he said; "either that or the East Hope."

"You'll look after Carrie, George, won't you?" she said.

"I'll look after her; never fear."

"I'm afraid the man Vaughan is rather annoying her."

"I'll see that he doesn't, while I'm with her," he promised. After this, he greeted Carrie. He did not see Vaughan, but heard his cheery voice from somewhere in the inn-yard. He did not see Nick, who was probably with Sir Edward, down the road.

"It ought to be a lovely hunt," he said. "How's the Night-Jar?"

"Almost too beautiful. Here's Charles Cothill."

Charles went lunging and plunging past upon his chestnut, among cries of "Why ride a circus horse?" or "Cheer up, Charles; we see the cobbler's wax." A little further down the road he nearly got among the hounds; ribaldry followed him.

"I hope that's not the chestnut he's riding in the point-to-point," George said.

"It is," Carrie said. "He's a beauty, isn't he?"

"He looks as though he'd extend Kilkenny," George said.

Almost at that moment there was a sudden leaping into life among the pack. Robin crossed the road past them with the pack at his heels, and little dry sideways yaps of

"Hounds, please, gemmen, hounds, please." Sir Peter went past, and all followed through out of the road into the pasture, where worn-out old pear-trees rotted, with great shrubs of mistletoe on their boughs.

They had gone about a quarter of a mile when Vaughan suddenly cut in on Carrie's right. "Good morning, Carrie," he said. "They're drawing Ghost Heath. You come along with me by the short cut here."

"You cut along by the short cut, Vaughan," George said, "and leave Miss Harridew alone."

"I'm not speaking to you, Childrey," Vaughan said, "Carrie and I quite understand each other. Besides, she promised to ride with me to-day, and I've come to claim her promise."

At this moment, the old bear, old Harridew, rode up. He thrust in between Carrie and Vaughan. "Excuse me, Mr. Childrey," he said to George. "I have a word to say here."

He was a fine big figure of a man who looked his very best in scarlet on horseback. "He would have made a good figurehead for a ship," Steer Harpit had said. His pride, intolerance, and unintelligence would have been less noticed in wood than in flesh. Now that he was fulfilling one of the main functions of his life, which was that of the protective angry bull, he looked almost beautiful. He was not a man to mince matters. "Mr. Vaughan," he said, "your attentions to my daughter are offensive to her. They are to stop. If they don't, I'll horsewhip you with these hands."

"Mr. Harridew," Vaughan said; "there's no need to advertise my suit for your daughter's hand in quite so public a fashion. And your threats are unworthy of you."

I don't think of your threats, because in such a cause I'll risk them, or a hundred such."

"I'm not going to argue the point," Harridew said. "I'm a man of my word, and so you'll find me."

"Right, sir," Vaughan said. "I'm a man of my word, too, and my word is pledged to Carrie, and so you'll find that."

There was no answer to this, for they had reached a gully in the covert, where Vaughan was forced to drop behind. In the next field he found himself alongside Len Stokes, a grazier. Carrie was riding ahead, between her father and George. Two or three other men were just behind her, hoping for a word, and thankful for the sight of her. Mike was one of them, young Cothill another.

"Who's the third chap on the black?" Vaughan asked.

"Young Crowmarsh," Stokes muttered.

"Gad," Vaughan said, "our young virgin's guarded like a prize she-cat; but this resolute Tom will get past, they'll find."

"You'll get the family battle-axe, if you're not careful," Stokes said. "And I won't blame the man who gives it you. You might be useful as a cross, Vaughan, but as permanent mating stock, I'd rather use a sheep-dog."

"I'll bet you an even pony," Vaughan said, "that the old man will be blessing me at the altar before the year's out."

"I won't rob you," Stokes said. "But one of you will have the other in the dock before that; I'll bet on that."

"In the dock? What for?"

"You, for I won't say what," Stokes said. "But the Squire for attempted murder."

They turned up the windy hill pasture among the old, weathered thorn-trees, now stripped of their berries. Little streamers of wool clung to some of the thorn-stems where sheep had rubbed; there were sheep snuggles here and there, where for centuries sheep had snuggled down out of the wind. Further on was the oval building of small unmortared stones. Lobs Pound the place was called. A pre-historic work, so thickly grown with sloes that there was no getting into it; the stones of it seemed to have decayed into the earth, so that it looked like a natural mound.

"Lobs Pound," Carrie said, as they drew near. "We always come here in the autumn for sloes, for the annual store of gin."

"Look, a weasel," George said. He promptly sucked his wrist so as to make a squeaking noise, like enough to the cry of a rabbit to hold the weasel on the wall till Carrie could see it.

"He's out early," George said. "And now here we come to the point of the wood."

The wood thrust a sort of snout towards them on the hilltop, and spread away on each side. The nearer parts had been stubbed down a year or two before, leaving only small stuff; beyond were big trees and many yews. An old gate, hanging on its lower hinge, was open. Its effect, against the yews, was sinister. Robin riding forward through it into covert seemed to be entering something evil.

Three poachers, Brassy, Pimply, and the Tiddler, who meant to do business in the wood after the hunt had gone, slipped round the east side of the covert after the second whip. A good many of the field followed

them; among them Nick and Sir Edward, to George's joy.

"What is the fox going to do, George?" Carrie asked.

"Run like fun," he said.

"Yes, but where?"

"Round the wood. No fox will break at once from a covert as big as this."

"Yes, but where will he break?"

"They're on to a fox," George answered, as a hound whimpered, and Robin harked them to it. "Yes, there are three more; the fun's beginning."

The horn blew to encourage hounds and the clear voice cheered them to it: hounds were plainly on a fox in covert, and moving away. Half-a-dozen excited riders pushed past George and Carrie, over the crest of the hill, and away down the further slope. One of them called out, "That sounds like business; I'll get to them." Two or three others, caught by the infection of action, followed.

"Hadn't we better go?" Carrie asked. "They're going."

"Don't you," George said. "He won't break from that side. Come on down the hill with these."

"There'll be no fox in this confounded place," the Squire said. "They're running a polecat or a badger."

"Badger your maiden aunt," a man said, pushing past.

Most of the rest of the field had begun to file down a woodcutter's cart-track which led through a spinney of hazel and spindle to the pastures below. "We'll follow on with these," George said, turning Kilkenny.

"Hadn't we better hurry?" Carrie said. "Look, they're away down below."

"Not they," George said. "They're still running him in covert. They'll rouse up a leash more foxes here."

"But look, George; they're riding."

Looking down-hill through the tall shoots of the hazels, on which already a few catkins hung, they had a glimpse of two men in scarlet cantering fast on the pasture below. The horsemen in the cart-track quickened into a trot at the sight of the canterers. "Don't you trot, Carrie," George said, "you won't be left behind. He won't break yet." The hounds were still in covert, but among much riot and the scents of half-a-dozen foxes who had been there during the night. As George and Carrie passed out of the cart-track into the pasture, they came upon Steer, reined in to one side, staring at Carrie with haggard eyes. It smote upon George's heart that Steer was taking his loss very bitterly to heart. "I must ride over to see him," he thought. After he had passed, he looked back at his old friend, and saw that he had turned from the hunt, and was riding slowly away.

"He must be feeling pretty sore," George thought, "not to be able to hunt." He would have liked to ride after him, to comfort him; but he was with Carrie, the most envied man there, hounds were on to their fox, and there was the field bunched together and attentive behind the figure of Tom the whip.

Tom moved slowly forward; the field now began to shog off towards the right, to avoid a neck of the wood. They came into a wooded hollow, said to have been one of Sir Christopher Wren's quarries, for some (not remembered) building. A lane led out of this; a hundred yards further on it forked into two tracks. The riders pressed down the track to the left. "Don't follow them down there, Carrie," George said. "Keep out, up here."

"But they're all going, George. And I don't want to be left behind."

"Come here," George said. "There's no way out of that lane except a thick thorn fence, fifteen feet high. Besides, it leads into the covert. They'll all have to come back. Now watch that strip of grass for the fox."

They watched, while the hounds cried in covert and the welter of horses in the lane, having joggled a while, began to joggle back.

"There he goes, Carrie," George said suddenly, leaning forward, following an intent trembling eagerness in Kilkenny. "Look! There; there, by the fence! A travelling dog. Do you see him?"

There went the fox, indeed, a little red flashing thing, looking much smaller than he was, because he was already fully extended. He gave no sense of enjoying it (as people said he did) but a vivid image of the terror of death. On the instant the cry in the covert swelled up into an ecstasy, and on the top of it came the ringing halloa of "Gone awa-wa-woy" from Tom. A horn blew, and a wave of motion surged out. A great bitch-hound, which George knew to be Daffodil (having marked her and heard her called) came over the fence where the fox had crossed it, in the very place, giving a terrible impression of infallibility. She was throwing her tongue in little excited cries. With her, just behind her, crying like her, and at one with her in their certainty, came Tarrybrecks, and Arrogant, and Queenie, with their sterns down straight and their heads up. Then instantly, from all over the place, came romping, joyous, helter-skelter hounds, who had done none of the work and didn't know where

the fox was, but knew that their leaders knew, and knew where their leaders were.

"There you are, Carrie," George said. "He's off for Larks Leybourne, and we're in the very front row. There comes Bob."

There came Bob, over the fence below them; he blew a blast as he landed, jammed his horn into his boot, cast an eye ahead, and gave a cheer to his beauties. Halloas came from all over the covert.

"No need to wait, Carrie," George said. "Come on. Now for glory."

They were off, as it were on the right bank of a stream of racing hounds, out of sight of the rest of the field and leading it. He saw Carrie's face all lit up with excitement and delight. They rode through a gate and across a field. They saw hounds going over a fence in front of them, and came over after them on to wet pale pasture, with Bob on their left forty yards away, and a young magpie hound tearing between them to get up. "Along to the right; follow me, Carrie," George cried. He knew that bit of the world rather better than most. They thundered muckily out of the field into a cart-track.

The whine and the drone of a threshing-machine came on their ears as they splashed through the muck into a farm-yard. A thresher stood by a staddled rick, hard at it. A man on a waggon paused with his fork in air as they came in sight. Three or four men stopped work on the instant, but the two were past, the ducks waddling and the poultry scuttering in front of them. They splashed into a cow-track which looked like a bog. George led through this, and in another fifty yards was out on the pasture again, in a big field, in which the cows were

ranged in line in the far corner, lowering and tossing heads, from the passing of the pack an instant before. "Lucky, those gates," George cried, "we stole a march on Bob there." Indeed Bob had only just entered the field far away to the left and behind them. "Are these bulls?" Carrie asked. "We won't stay to see," George said. "I'll give you a lead. It's nothing of a fence."

It was nothing of a fence, there was no need of any lead, they went across it into a big field sloping down before them. The sun came out suddenly, so that it seemed to both, as they landed, that they had leaped into a world of light, or into a world lit by their own enjoyment. The field was all lit; the pools of the little stream beside them gleamed blue; in front there was a steelier gleam from the Yell Brook overlapping its banks. Away to the left was Sir Peter; far in front was a glimpse of hounds. A big brown horse with his stirrups flying high came over the fence beside White Rabbit. As yet no one was in it with George and Carrie; they were leaders of what was surely the quickest burst ever made into the very cream of the country. To George there came an image which he never forgot of the lovely Carrie at her loveliest, at one with her lovely black horse, against a slope of a hill, in which a field of pale plough lay above a field of red plough, with elm-trees black-twigged against the sky, rooks building in them, and intense green under the hedge.

He had a glimpse of hounds swerving to the right. No one else in the hunt could have seen it; the lie of the ground must have hidden it from Sir Peter and Bob. He called to Carrie, "Keep on after me." He charged across into the red plough, took it slantingly, came out on to

pasture, with the tail of the pack ahead, and came down to a double-gated cattle-bridge over the Yell. "Saves you jumping the Yell," he called, as he opened the gates for her, one after the other. "By George! we're in luck to-day."

They rode across a narrow field, scrambled up a bank, broke through a young thorn fence, and found how well in luck they were. They were in sight of hounds; the only people who were, though behind them, to their left, were twenty doing their best at the jumping of the Yell. "What became of Father?" Carrie called. "Scuppered, probably," George called. The two horses went side by side, stride for stride, as full of joy as their riders. The red-brick Nonesuch Farm hove up on the left. Two women and three little children came running to the little rose-garden to see. A cowman pointed with his hat, but there was no need for him to point; they were in the same field with hounds (three hounds), the sun was shining, Carrie was there, and the horses going like angels. A covey of partridges whirled away to the right.

As they went over a fence an owl in an apple-stump hooted above them with a cry that was like the laughter of the morning.

They came up to the disused mill of Nonesuch, where old, knobby cob-nut trees grew over the stank. They crossed the dark pool and saw hounds ahead going up the grass of Gallows Hill, swerving away from them. They strode out from the mill to the stretch of the grass; larks were aloft and others went as they galloped. "If there be a heaven upon earth," George sang, "it is this, it is this, it is this." "It is," Carrie cried. But the heaven to him was the ecstasy in Carrie's face.

They went over the crest of Gallows Hill into red clay plough where four plough teams were halted, with men at the horses' heads, all staring in the same direction. Rooks were rising over the fields on ahead; they splashed along the drain in that direction. They came up to a fence beyond which the hounds were at fault. Bob was with them now, so was Tom. Sir Peter was up a moment later, with Charles Cothill and a man in a rat-catcher. There was no stay; Bob held them on over a raddled deep stream on to what was called the battlefield, where men had been killed in the Wars of the Roses. Nob Manor, Bunny's brother, rode up alongside George. "Have you seen Nick?" George asked. "Your damned writ-serving brother, you mean?" Nob said. "Yes, he got left the other side the covert." Here the hounds got the scent full again and were off past the Norman church and away on to Tineton Waste, a grazing worth half-a-crown an acre, from which they saw their fox's point, the Wan Dyke, in the downland above Larks Leybourne.

They went through a dozen fields and across a spinney, skirted some orchards, and came out on to Long Hinton Green, both blowsy and hot, with wisps of Carrie's hair loose and the horses dark with sweat. In front was a swell of downland with three black trees upon it, so spaced and sized that they looked like a ship's masts under sail.

They went lollopping up the downs past the fir-trees, and then away over the expanse, where nothing grew but the grass, a few thorns, a few junipers, and gorse too sparse to hide a fox. Larks went up and rabbits scuttered away from them till they came to Blowbury, where the vast down suddenly became immense and all

covert seemed to cease. For two miles there seemed nothing but grass, with the wind running over it in ripples swifter than water ripples. The horses felt the glory of it. To George, beside the glory, was the ecstasy of being with Carrie, sailing from wonder to wonder on this adventure of speed. Whatever the fox may have felt, those four spirits at speed were knitted into the one joy, and George's eyes were as like as stars to Carrie's.

Up at Maesbury, an archæologist, grubbing for flints in the plough and finding only bits of Samian ware (which he despised), saw the fox go past in a furrow, which perhaps left colder scent than the grass. A moment later he saw the hounds (he was the only man who did, at this point) coming unfailingly ten yards to leeward of the fox's track. He blessed his stars that those eyes and hackled necks were not after him. Later, he realized that he had never seen anything like it for will bent upon destruction. A minute later he saw the hunt go by, in a scattered chivalry much the worse for wear, and wondered who the golden girl was who rode the black horse so well.

They galloped past Maesbury into Thirty Acre for the last half mile to Wan Dyke Hill. They saw the fox's point ahead, with the Seven Standing Stones on the far side of the bourne, and a big barrow half ploughed out. George and Carrie were well up still, but others were ahead of them. That did not matter much now, for they had held their own in such a run as they had never had. George was thinking that he would share this in Carrie's memory forever, and that life had touched its peak, or almost its peak. If Carrie would have him it would be the peak.

They rode at a little dark fence, which had a lot of

privet among its thorn. What happened, George never quite knew, and Carrie, who had jumped in front of him, could not tell him; but Kilkenny put in his toes and shot George into the privet, where he kicked for an instant, still holding the reins, in a scratched, wrenched, and startled state, wondering what on earth was the matter. As he groped himself up, feeling that no bone was broken and no vital button gone, Carrie came circling back, crying, "Oh, George, are you hurt?"

"No, thanks," he said. "All right. Go on; go on. Don't spoil your run. You were a brick to turn."

"Whatever happened?" she said. "I had a sort of sideways glimpse of you falling. You seemed to go a fearful purler. Are you sure you're all right?"

"Right as rain, thanks. But go on to see the end. They'll kill him on his earth here." He came up to Kilkenny, who was inclined to swerve away; he mounted and put him over the fence.

"Too bad, my stopping your run," he said. "Now I've put you out of it all. However, he's dead by this time."

"We'll take it quietly, George," Carrie said, "till I see whether you really are all right."

Hounds had disappeared upon the Wan Dyke; five riders showed ahead of them, splashing through the flood where the bourne had overflowed. The hill behind them seemed sprinkled with riders converging upon them. "Pull round to the right of the hill, Carrie," George said. "It's less steep that side."

"Now tell me truly, George, how you feel," Carrie asked.

"Honestly, all right, thanks; nothing wrong, not even scratched. I didn't quite know where I was for a second;

now I'm myself again. I'm only vexed that I've spoiled your run."

"Spoiled my run," she said. "You've given me the run of my life. I've never, never had such a day."

They heard the note of a horn from somewhere in the Wan Dyke. In a minute or two they came upon the hunt drawn out of the way of hounds in a boggy green patch near a pool. Hounds were checked on the hill-side. Bob was with them, speaking to one or two by name, and watching their work intently. Some men were dismounted and had turned their reeking horses to the wind. Some second horsemen came up and made their exchanges. Mrs. Ridden rode up in her masterful, manly way. "That was a pretty good skurry, Sir Peter," she cried. "Not much wrong with that. But make a long lift, Sir Peter, or he'll be on to Cheddesdon Warren."

"He's probably lying down in a rut within a hundred yards of us," someone answered. A man came up on a heaving horse; he mopped his brow and took a sup of cherry brandy. "Pretty little nip, that," he said. "Gad, did anybody time it? Up to the Quorn, by Gad!"

There came a movement from the pack as Bob lifted them: all followed after him along the side of the wood, which grew battered, starved oak-trees shining with lichens. Charles Copse, the gentle and beautiful, rode up to Carrie. "If you and Mr. Childrey go anywhere near my place," he said, "my wife will be so glad if you'll go in for lunch or coffee or something. Do go in. Was it you to took a toss there, Mr. Childrey? I hope you're none the worse."

"No, rather not, thanks."

"What happened?"

"Can't think," George said. "I suddenly went wallop."

Hounds spoke to a scent a few minutes later; off they went at head over the rolling grass of Godsdawn. Someone said, "A fresh fox"; but George, whose eyes were very quick, saw the fox ahead, and answered: "No, the old one. See him there. That's a hunted fox." Not many saw him there, but the gallop began again. Men said, "No fox on earth will stand up another two miles." Others said, "A good game fox, but hounds have earned him. They'll kill this side the brook."

But now the salt was gone out of the gallop for George and Carrie; they kept on, but could not keep up. Hounds made a swerve, which threw them out. They found themselves alone, out of sight of even a rider. "He's running short," George said; "he can't be far from us. And I must get one of his pads for you." A man in a red coat hove in sight; they followed him, till some boys gave them a direction. In following the direction they passed out of any trace of the hunt. They saw no rooks rising, no cattle bunching, no sheep running into line; they heard no whimper nor blast of horn.

"We're out of it," George said.

"Where are we?"

"That's Mourne End Wood up above us. If we get up the hill we may see what's going on. Yes, look; there some of them go; yes, and there are hounds. We'll see the end of it. The Night-Jar looks as if he'd had about enough."

"So does yours," Carrie said.

"We'll stop while there's something in them," George said. "We're a long way from home."

They rode up a sunken trackway, listening for the burst

of the pack running into their fox. They heard no hounds, but a coarse voice cheering hounds some considerable distance to windward of them. They came into Mourne Camp, with a yew wood on their left and a sighing fir plantation on the right. There was now no noise of the hunt whatsoever. A blue-jay flashed his wings and swore at them.

"They haven't killed," George said, "so they must be running. It's odd that we don't hear them."

They rode on into the darkness of the wood, hearing no sound of the hunt. Suddenly with a crashing in the dead leaves of a beech-clump, a hare went across their track and fled away from them.

"Did you catch that reek of fox?" George asked at one point. "It was almost as strong as a touch."

"No, I missed it," Carrie said.

Presently they came out of the wood into a grass valley, with a deep sunk brook in the bottom. Away to the left, a ditcher stood watching something; soon he left his watching and came down to clear a choked drain. "Which way did hounds go?" George called.

"Thiccy," the man said, pointing.

"Were they on to a fresh fox?"

"Ah."

"Did you see the fox?"

"How?"

"Did you see the fox?"

"No. No, I didn't see the fox." He paused to consider this, then added: "No, I couldn't have seen the fox, for he was gone, gone afore I could have seen him."

"Were hounds running fast?"

The man mopped his brow, spat and straightened himself wearily, as he put down his ditching spade. "I'll show 'ee," he said, leading the way up the slope for a few yards. "I wasn't paying much attention, if you'll understand me, being a man as has had troubles; but I heard hounds back a piece. They went across the far field, where that red coat is riding."

"How long have they been gone?" George asked. "Five minutes?"

"Ah, it might a bin."

"Were hounds going fast?"

"How?"

"Were hounds running fast?"

"Ah. Like a vlight a twites."

"What I expected," George said to Carrie. "They've changed foxes in covert." He turned to the ditcher. "I suppose you didn't see a beaten fox, a fox that had been hunted, come through the fence here?"

"No," the man said. "And if I had done, I wouldn't tell 'ee. If you want to kill the poor thing, kill him; not run him down same as you would do a man."

"I shouldn't do the same to a man," George said.

"Why do it to a poor beast, then? God Almighty gave him feelings, I hope." He turned wearily to the muck and thrust the ditching spade into it. "I've got my work to attend to," he added.

The man had a coloured cutty pipe stuck in his hat-brim. "I see you smoke," George said. "Will you have a cigar?"

"Yes, and two if you've got the same; and I'll cut 'em up and pipe 'em." George gave him the cigars.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Jackment. Will Jackment, of what they call Jackment's Piece.

"Jackment's Piece my dwelling-place is
And muck's my occupation."

"Would you like to change your occupation?" George asked.

"No, I would not," the man said. "Time was when I would have; but now I say, 'Give me muck,' I say, 'acos it'll always be there; long after all these new-fangled things are gone down into the bonfire.' And so I tell 'ee plain."

At this, he turned to the muck in a way that stopped the talk.

"I liked that chap," George said, as they rode away.

"I thought him very rude," Carrie said. "Why did you give him your cigars?"

"Because I've had a topping day and want to share it."

"I expect you'll find that he drinks," Carrie said.

"He's a jolly good ditcher," George said. "And of an old family, too; one of the Jaquemains who got a grant of this county from the Conqueror; he's related to you, probably; he must be a Norman."

"I'm sure he's not related to me," Carrie said, somewhat stiffly.

About thirty yards ahead of them, a blue-jay was swearing in a tree in covert; some small birds were chattering excitedly in the fence of the wood.

"What are the birds mobbing?" Carrie asked.

"An owl or a squirrel," George said. As they rode past the excited birds, George peered at the fence, which was of black thorn, with the stalks of bracken in it. George had good country eyes, quick to catch subtle changes. He

saw nothing as he passed, but just after he had passed he saw something move, ever so slightly, as though with relief at a danger gone. He said nothing for half a minute, then he said, "That was our fox in the hedge, lying down to die. He'll never get up after such a gruelling. They changed in the wood, as I said."

"Father always says that Sir Peter ought to breed more for speed," Carrie said. "They ought to have pulled him down at Larks Leybourne."

"What would you like to do now, Carrie? We might see something more of them at Nun's Wood, or would you care to shog along to Copse Hold, which can't be more than a couple of miles?"

"I'm game to go along, George," she said. "But we'd never get back from Nun's Wood. Let's go to see Mrs. Copse."

"Right," he said, "we will."

They were alone together in that lonely valley between the woods; the cup of George's happiness was almost full, yet he could not tell his love: he was in a pleasant glow instead of being white hot. They shogged on together for about half a mile, when Lady Crowmarsh and Long Robert crossed their path.

"Have you seen anything of hounds, Carrie?" Lady Crowmarsh asked.

"Yes, they're on for Nun's Wood," Carrie said.

"Did they kill their first fox?" Long Robert asked.

"They've killed nothing."

"They've nearly killed me," Lady Crowmarsh said. "However, if we push on to Crendon we may have news of them there."

George and Carrie rode on for Copse Hold, talking of

those bits of the run which had pleased them most. Carrie had best liked the burst from Neaking's Farm, when they had come into the field in front of Bob; George was all for the present moment.

"But I owe the whole run to you, George," Carrie said. "You not only lent me the Night-Jar, but you piloted me so well. How could you have guessed that the fox would break where he did?"

"It was my lucky day all through," George said. "I know the Ghost Heath very well, but I thought from the shindy men were making that he'd break further south."

"What about Nick?" she said. "I wonder what happened to him."

"He got left on the wrong side of covert, as I thought he would."

"It wasn't very brotherly, was it, George, not to warn him?"

"He's a lot too positive to be warned," George said.

"Poor Nick," Carrie said. "I don't suppose he has had much of a day."

"He's all right," George said.

"You're very ruthless about Nick, aren't you, George?"

"It's an elder brother's perquisite."

"I'm sorry he had a poor day," Carrie said. "After all, he came further for his hunt than most people there."

"I thought that he came partly on business," George said. Somehow, after the glory of the gallop, little things were setting them at variance; first, Will Jackment, then this shadow of Nick. "He's a jolly good lawyer, Nick," he said generously. "And doing most awfully well. He'll be in Park Lane by the time he's thirty-five. He takes law awfully hard."

"Don't you think men ought to take their profession hard?" Carrie asked. "They don't leave a mark unless they do."

"I wonder," George said. From habit he checked his horse a little, pointed with his hand, and marked down a covey of partridges into some roots on his left.

"How can they, unless they take it hard?" Carrie persisted.

"I'm not sure about leaving a mark," George said.

"How do you mean, George? That it isn't a good thing to leave a mark?"

"Well, is it? I rather stick up for the comet. It takes it hard enough, but it leaves no mark, only a memory."

"You wouldn't like people to be like comets, would you, George? After all, they're only a little bright gas."

"They brighten things up," George said. Carrie didn't want that kind of brightening; she was all for the fixed stars. Luckily at this point they reached Copse Hold, where Mrs. Copse, a fair-haired, graceful lady, received them. Charles Copse and two other men came in a few minutes later.

"They've not killed," Charles said. "They are going on for Nun's Wood as if they had only just found."

"How he has stood up so long is a marvel to me," a man said.

"These travellers often go," the other man said. "But this chap isn't like a fox at all. I never was in anything like it."

"He must be a fairy fox," Mrs. Copse said.

"Oh, blithesome traveller, art thou beast
Or but a wandering scent?"

"He's a fox," George said. "And they changed in

Mourne End Wood to a fresh one. The old one's lying down in the fence there; I saw him. I'll go out to-morrow, and take his brush, for he'll never rise again after such a gruelling; and a gamer fox never ran."

"You'll never persuade them that they changed," Charles said.

"Never in the wide earth," a man said. "They'll take the cash and let the credit go."

"I hope hounds'll kill," the other man said. "They deserve their fox."

"I suppose it's sentimental and all that," the first man said, "but one has a sort of feeling about the place where a fox is killed. We passed a place to-day, where I saw my first fox killed. It was in one of those fields near Tineton, up in the corner, where there is a bank with palings. The fox had come down from up by the Ree, on grass all the way. He was making for an earth in the bank, a big rabbit barrow, quite big enough for him. A beautiful big hound called Symphony, you'll remember her, I expect, pulled him down in the last five yards. You know, it's a fascinating thing to watch, though one is sorry in a way. But it marks the place in one's mind. When I came past there this morning, it all lit up; an odd thing; it all became alive."

"We are excited when we are hunting," Copse said. "All memories of excitement are vivid."

"Hunting is a little like Platonic love, isn't it?" Mrs. Copse asked. "It is self-indulgence, and yet you feel that it is doing you good."

"I knew Symphony well," the first of the two men said. "She was a big Magpie. She was bred by this chap's father."

"That's the hound. She was here three or four seasons."

"Yes, and afterwards went to one of the grass packs, the big magpie pack. She's had her day now, and gone to earth."

"A good day, a hound's day, for an animal's day," Copse said.

"Odd about foxes," one of the men went on; "they seem so often to be killed just on the top of their earth, or in the last five yards. It's often as close as a toucher, will he get there."

Presently George and Carrie set off together on the long shog home. About a mile from Copse Hold they met a man in sodden scarlet who looked like a corpse dug up. He was Sir Button Budd, on a foundered second horse. "Did they kill him, Sir Button?" Carrie asked.

"No," he said. "They were on for Nun's Wood when I left them. I've been in Deerlip Brook for the last hour."

"They changed in Mourne End Wood," George said.

"So I thought," Sir Button said. "But you won't persuade them of that."

"No bones broken, I hope, Sir Button?" George said.

"No," Sir Button said; "I've broken eleven bones out hunting, but haven't broken one to-day—yet. I reckon that I've only got one more to break, for the thirteenth will end me. Good afternoon."

The two shogged on again in the ending of the beautiful day; the birds were beginning to turn homewards, the finches in clouds, the starlings in wheeling flurries, the rooks high up in company, yet distinct.

Just outside the Passways Farm the Night-Jar picked

up a stone, which George could not get out. "Wait a minute," he said, "I'll nip into the farm for a picker."

He was kept waiting a minute in a room to the right of the farm door. It was a gloomy room, with one wall almost covered with books of eighteenth-century sermons. On a shelf below there was a guncase, a tin of saddle polish, two tins of teat salve, and a horn drench. He remembered these things afterwards, when the stone had been picked and the journey resumed.

He wanted to tell Carrie that he loved her, but the time was not right; they were riding, and people were on the road, getting home from work. "Carrie," he said, "I do thank you for to-day. I've never had such a day; it has been the most glorious day I ever had."

"It has been a jolly day, hasn't it?"

"It isn't all 'has been,' even yet," he said. "There are still some crumbs left."

"I've enjoyed every minute of it so far," Carrie said.

"I shall remember it always," he said. "When I'm dead my dust will shine from it. My first real hunt for six years, and such a hunt, and then to have been with you all the time."

The way seemed open to him now for a burst of confidence and of love: the moment seemed right: there was a glow of sympathy between the two. Then, suddenly, from a deep lane which ran into their road a few yards ahead of them, some boyish voices struck up a song.

The boys, with a couple of dogs, came into the road in front of them, and marched just ahead of them, singing, for the next quarter of a mile. The happy moment was

killed; all had to begin again. However, when the boys turned off at a field path, George tried to make another opening.

"It's jolly bad luck," he said, "that one can't have more days like this."

"That would be 'blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure,' " she said. "Days like these—

'Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
Or captain jewels in the carcanet.'"

"I know," he said; "I met a chap once who told me a Spanish proverb: 'There are more days than sausages.' But I shall go over this day again and again, and see you going over that fence at Nonesuch."

"Yes," she said, "with my hair all coming loose and untidy."

"You never looked anything but absolutely perfect," he said. "But at that moment you looked glorious."

That was his run along the springboard, but before he could dive there came the cries of men and the barking of a dog. The men of the Foxwhelps were shifting the cows along. The cows came out into the road sway-footed, with swaying udders, heads tossing, going all about them in their direction. They rode for some minutes among these sweet-breathed creatures whose pace was that of a loiterer. They could not win clear of the cows for a couple of hundred yards; that happy moment was killed; all had to begin again.

They were now less than half a mile from the Manor house, so that George was beginning to feel desperate. They rode down a deeply sunken lane overshadowed by trees. A woman had been murdered there during George's childhood; he could not talk of love there.

He determined to speak when they came out of the lane by the turnpike.

But alas! at the cross-roads a rider in a red coat drew up to them from the Lowbury direction. It was Vaughan.

"Ah, my little Carrie," he said; "I've been hoping for this all day."

"Now, Vaughan," George said; "you're warned off here. You take the warning as meant."

"This is no concern of yours, Childrey," Vaughan answered. "I am not addressing any remarks to you."

"I am addressing some to you," George said. "Mr. Harridew left me in charge of this lady, and I say: There's your road, this is ours."

They were just outside the turnpike-keeper's cottage, some of the inhabitants of which had come out at the sound of hoofs, and now remained to listen. These were "Long-Head," a half-witted man who did odd jobs, his illegitimate daughter Sal, a bold young hussy with a loose mouth, and three of her illegitimate children. (The other three were in the one bed in the cottage, suffering from measles.) At the same time a cowman and his boy came into the road and appeared to be looking for mushrooms.

"The rudiments of a crowd," Vaughan muttered.

"Yes," George said quickly. "Let's have no scene here, for the lady's sake."

Carrie trotted on. George checked Vaughan from following. "Chuck it, man," he said, "or there'll be trouble." A good deal passed in Vaughan's face; then he said, "You'll hear from me before you're much older. So au revoir, my hawbuck."

He gave a menacing nod to George and rode off by

his own road. George cantered after Carrie, and came up with her three hundred yards further on. She had been a good deal disturbed by Vaughan's interruption.

"I'm awfully sorry, Carrie," he said. "But don't you bother; the ruffian's gone. I don't think he'll trouble you again."

There was no more chance of tender talk; this last interruption had been fatal. They chatted of indifferent things till they were at the Manor, where young Kick Purton was waiting for Carrie.

"Is Mr. Harridew in?" she asked.

"Yes, miss," Kick said, with a grin. "He was in by twelve. He got into the brook, miss. I hear you had a very good day, miss."

"We had, indeed."

"I heard you were in front of everybody, you and the gentleman."

"Yes, for a time."

It was now time for George to turn away, the day was over, he could not linger it out into anti-climax. Carrie was standing beside him, with a gathered habit and her face upturned. "We shall see you to lunch to-morrow, George?" she said.

"Yes, rather; thank you. Good night."

"Good night."

He rode away into the evening, hearing the brown owls begin, and the wrens and robins cease. Presently he was at the Bartons in the light of the stable, making much of his horse.

"You've had a day to-day, Master George," Will said.

"Yes, we'd a day to-day," George said. "And this old fellow led them for the best of it."

Nick came downstairs dressed for dinner at the Manor; he was carrying a bag.

"What sort of a day did you have?" George asked.

"I?" Nick said. "Why, a very good day; a good little gallop towards the Sailing Ship, which was the limit my thing could manage; then back to lunch with Sir Edward, where I did a little business for the firm; now I'm going to dine with the Harridews. I'm going back to town from there, so don't wait up for me. Good night; thanks for the lodging."

He was at the door, at the point of letting himself out, when he seemed to remember something.

"Oh, by the way, George," he said; "Sir Edward, among other things, rather prides himself on his model dairy. If you are going to do that kind of thing here, you might be glad of a few wrinkles, from one who really knows all the latest that there is to know."

"I should be very glad," George said.

"I thought you might be," Nick said. "I rather adroitly led the talk that way. Sir Edward was graciously pleased to say that if you would come over to lunch next week, his bailiff would show you everything. Sir Edward will write to you presently, to arrange it. It won't be for ten days or so, as he is going to London."

"Thanks for arranging it for me," George said. "I'd like to see his herd. I suppose you haven't brought those photographs?"

"Ah," Nick said. "I knew that there was something that I'd forgotten. I had them all laid out to bring to

you. I'll bring them the next time I come down. Good night."

"I'll bet you won't," George growled, as the door closed.

About an hour after Nick had gone, Polly announced Mr. Harpit. Steer came in, looking broken-hearted. He refused food, drink and tobacco; he sat mum over the fire.

"I'm sorry you didn't stay for the hunt, Steer," George said. "It was a rattling good day."

"I thought I might get a little peace out of it," Steer said. "But it was no go. It pretty nearly bowled me over."

"I was awfully sad to see you turning away," George said. "I guessed how it was with you."

"I shouldn't think you were awfully sad, being where you were," Steer said. "I'd a damner day than the last, to tell the truth. I had only one consolation, to see that damned brother of yours thrown out, by going the wrong side of the covert. I hear he got into Yell Brook later."

"Who? Nick? He said he had a good little gallop towards the Sailing Ship."

"He can call it that," Steer said. "You can call the world an ill-made square, if you like. Yell Brook's as far as he got. He went in all standing for a full due."

"He kept it pretty dark," George said. "But about yourself, Steer; do have something, and try to cheer up."

"It's no good my trying to cheer up," Steer said. "There's no place here that doesn't remind me of her. Besides, I can't be sure when I go to a place that I shan't run into her, as I did this morning. I'm going to get out of it."

"Wherever to?"

"I'm going back to sea."

"Good Lord, man, don't," George said. "You've got your place so nice; and I was looking forward to all sorts of fun with you."

"I was looking forward to fun, too," Steer said. "More than I'd any right to, I suppose. However, that's done."

"It isn't done at all," George said. "Hang it! Lots of chaps have to ask dozens of girls before one will have them."

"That's so," Steer said, "but I'm not lots of chaps. I'm only me. And anyhow, she'd no need to rub that in; because it is all I have. Anyhow, the sea can't do that on me."

"But, my good chap," George said, "there's no need to go to sea, any more than to cut off a leg because your tooth aches. Go abroad for a bit and learn a language; or go to town and see the theatres."

"Well, you know yourself, George, that those aren't the kind of things you yourself would do if you were hit. You'd raise Cain. I won't raise Cain; I'm not that sort. But I've got to do something, and I'm going back to sea."

"But how about your place?"

"I don't care twopence for it, as it stands. Besides, my brother Tim, the one I'm fond of, will look after that, or my sister Enid, the one whose hair you used to like. I've got it all planned out, only I thought I'd come to tell you."

"How long are you going for?" George asked.

"I'm going for as long as the cure will take," Steer said. "In anything that will take me, as long as she isn't Scotch-rigged or parish-owned."

Polly entered at this moment to tell George that a Mr. Cannaby would like to speak to him.

"Cannaby?" George said. "Who's that?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What does he want; did he say?"

"He wanted to speak to you, sir, in person."

"All right," George said. "Show him in." As Polly went he added, "I wonder who the devil Cannaby can be, and what he wants at this time of night?"

"He's probably a dealer of sorts, who's got a horse that would just suit you," Steer said. "Or, it might be that chap Cannonbone who hangs out with Vaughan."

It turned out to be that chap Cannonbone, looking more mirthless than ever. George wondered what the devil he was come for, but asked him to sit down. He gave a cold and evil nod to Steer.

"Shall I clear out?" Steer asked.

"This is my friend, Mr. Harpit," George said; "I suppose that he may hear what you've got to say?"

"Yes," Cannonbone answered. "If he's a friend of yours it may be as well."

"He is a friend of mine, as I said," George answered. "Will you have a drink or a smoke?"

"I don't care for those things," Cannonbone said. "I come from my friend Vaughan."

"Oh, yes?"

"I don't know what your own memory of the matter may be, but my friend Vaughan considers that you insulted him."

"Indeed?" George said.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I've come from my friend to ask what you mean to do about it?"

"I don't mean to do anything about it," George said.

"If you'll excuse my saying so, that's not an answer."

"If you'll excuse my saying so," George said, "it is my answer. In any case, it is not a matter that I will discuss with you."

"Excuse me," Cannonbone said, "I come here from my friend in a recognized position. After an insult, there is but one course. He has asked me to come here to say that he considers that you insulted him, and awaits your apology."

"Really, Mr. Cannonbone," George said, "I must ask you to go. This matter cannot concern you. Quite enough has been said, now here is the door."

"Turned out, eh?" Cannonbone said, rising to his feet. "I am not altogether easy to turn." He pulled down his waistcoat with a jerk which seemed to shake him to the knees. He walked to the door, where he turned. "I suppose you think the days of asking for satisfaction are over," he said, "but the days of taking it aren't." He looked bitterly at Steer, who was watching him from the other side of the fire.

"Nor of giving it," Steer said.

"The watch-dog bites, too, does he?" Cannonbone said, as his eye roved along the panelling beyond Steer's head. "Well, no need for more words. I've said what I had to say. I wish you both good night." He strode along the passage in front of George, picked up his bowler hat and ash plant, and flung out through the front door without another word. George saw the door closed, then returned to Steer.

"Vaughan actually sent that skunk as a second to me,"

he said. "Or is the chap mad or drunk? Who is this Cannonbone?"

"He is said to have been in the militia, or a line regiment, or something: he isn't smart enough for volunteers. He's hung on to Vaughan for the last two seasons, a sort of parasite. He's a dealer, or a dealer's buyer. He buys old furniture and old woodwork and stuff, and sends it to his chiefs in the West End. He squirms his way into houses, to see if they've anything. He's quite likely to have come here to-night simply because he's heard of your panelling."

"He hunts, I gather."

"He hunts when he can cadge a mount."

"I'd be sorry to see him on a horse of mine," George said.

"It's none of my business," Steer said, "but did you give Vaughan the end of a brace?"

"No; but I jolly soon should have, if he hadn't seen wisdom."

"About Carrie, I suppose?"

George nodded.

"Some chaps have all the luck," Steer said. After a minute or two, he said suddenly: "I suppose Carrie isn't going to marry Vaughan?"

"My good heaven, no. He's forbidden the Manor."

"All right," Steer said. "After a time a chap gets into the way of expecting the worst. I'll be moving on. I'll send you word where I'm going."

At the door he said suddenly: "Listen! Hear that?" It was a faultless night, with the moon keeping her sheep in heaven. Far away, all the dogs of the village were barking. "The hounds going home," Steer said. "They've

had a long shog. I hope they killed, for a hound that hunts and doesn't kill hasn't much use for the world." With this, he set off for home, whistling a plaintive tune, which George knew to be "To Falmouth for Orders."

At about a quarter past twelve in the next day, George set out to walk to the Manor, intending to cross the beech-wood to the point where Vaughan had appeared the day before. He walked among the clean grey boles, scuffling up the fox-coloured litter. As he entered the lane he saw Carrie, walking away from him, perhaps a hundred and fifty yards from him. Just as he caught sight of her a man, who seemed to have been lying in wait behind a wall, clambered suddenly over, ran at her, caught her in his arms, and——

"Vaughan, my golly!" George cried. He set off running towards them, shouting, "Hi, you!"

Carrie struggled away from Vaughan's grasp, but he followed her down into the ditch, caught her by both arms, and dragged her back into the lane. "So the pretty Carrie's coy," he was saying. "You know that's only mock modesty." George clouted him on the side of his head just above the ear the instant after he said it. It was a poor blow, it only knocked the cap off. Carrie was white with fear and indignation; her eyes were extraordinarily dark, her face suddenly old, with all the beauty gone.

"Damn it, my hawbuck," Vaughan said, letting go his hold of her and turning upon George. "You've got a pretty country cheek."

"I hope so," George said quietly. "I'll settle with you later. If you wait here, I'll return to you, when I have seen this lady home."

"She is walking with me," Vaughan said.

"You lie," George said.

There the scene ended, because at that instant, old Purton and old Baldy Hill, carrying guns and nets, followed by two lads, each carrying a bag of ferrets, came round the corner from Bert's Low. George promptly took Carrie's arm and had her away into the pasture; and so had his heart's desire, of rescuing his beloved from the dragon. It wasn't much of a rescue; he hadn't hit Vaughan's ear, only his beastly bony skull; and Vaughan was following at a little distance; and however grateful Carrie might be feeling for being rescued, she wasn't liking being seen in that state. "This will just about wreck the lunch," he thought.

He had not far to go with her. At the end of the pasture was the copse, then the ornamental water with the gold-fish, then the lawn with the new tennis-courts, then the Manor. He uttered odds and ends of comfort. "It's all over. Don't you bother. Don't you be distressed, Carrie. Shall I swear at him for you?"

"No, thanks, George," she said. "Though it's charming of you to offer."

"Shall we call off the lunch till another day?" he asked.

"No, no," she said. "Then father might ask why you aren't there, and so get to know. You won't tell father, will you? He might be so violent."

"I'll not tell; no fear."

"Thank you, George," she said. "Here we are then. Come in while I tidy up a little; and thank you for seeing me home." She put out her hand frankly to him and let him hold it. She looked at him with much approval. They were in the little passage leading past the Squire's study, the door was open, and the Squire was moving

about, growling. He came to the door at the instant and said, "Ha, Carrie; ha, George, my lad"; and so another of George's chances was spoiled.

While George and Carrie went to the house across the tennis-courts, Vaughan watched them from the copse. When they had entered in, he followed them, under cover of the shrubberies, till he reached a little ruined garden shed among the yew and overgrown box-trees near the house. The tall wall of old red brick screened him from the kitchen and kitchen-yard. He sat down upon a pile of rotting seedling-boxes and lit a cigarette, while on the other side of the wall the maids scolded and wrangled and called each other "dear." A wren came pertly in, jerked about, poked out a couple of spiders and flicked away. The cigarette slowly waned; then the Manor gong gave out the sweet muffled booming which called the family to lunch. He could just hear the moving of the rope in the hoist which took dishes from the kitchen to the dining-room. "They are a punctual lot," he thought. "I'll give them a few minutes more and then they'll be at it. If she won't have me the proper way, I'll have her the other. It's the only way to deal with these beauties, to go right at them and compromise them and knock some of their modesty out of them. Then they realize their position in this world of men. And so Carrie will, before she's two hours older." He lit a second cigarette from the first; he was enjoying his morning. "As for that young ass, Childrey," he thought, "he's a young pup in love; forget him."

It was very quiet in the little tool-shed, except for the muffled clatter of crockery and occasional remarks from maids in the kitchen-yard. The stable-hands were at

dinner, and the gardeners were either in the walled garden, or the greenhouse a hundred yards away. He knew that there was little chance of interruption from them. "Now for it," he muttered, grinding his cigarette-butt under foot, "I'll have a little look about my prospective pa's domain."

He walked quietly out of the shrubbery and surveyed the Manor's south front.

He knew the house fairly well. Two years before, he had often dined there. Once, even, he had been upstairs, to see the Squire's father's collection of medals. He knew that the middle floor had a central passage with rooms on both sides, those on the north being used by the Squire or for guests, those on the south by the family. By careful inquiry he had gained some knowledge of these rooms. He looked up at the line of seven ample Georgian windows.

He knew that the end one lit the east room, once the bedroom of Mick, the son, now dead in Arizona. Next to this, he had heard, was Lou's room, "always very untidy." Then, "in the middle with two windows," so Carrie had said, came Carrie's room, "with Jane's beyond it," and a spare room beyond Jane's.

"The third and fourth windows," he muttered to himself; "and the third door, that's where my little darling is, and that's where we'll be alone together, since Jane's gone visiting, and Lou's away to her in-laws."

He cast an eye over the place, thinking that it was all going back in the betting for want of money to keep it up. Then he peeped in at the Squire's office window.

He drew back suddenly as he did so, because a maid was there, mending the fire in the Squire's absence. "I

ought to have thought of that," he thought. "She will probably go to the two sitting-room fires also. However, her back was towards me. If she looks out of the window, she'll see me."

She did not look out of the window, but at the letters on the Squire's table, which she read through with interest before she left the room. Vaughan waited, listening, till the maid had finished and gone. Then he slipped through the garden door and into the study which the maid had just left.

He glanced at the Stubbses on the wall, for he was fond of the eighteenth century. He walked to the hearth-rug and stood there for a moment, in the Squire's attitude, with his back to the fire. Knowing that the old man could not endure tobacco, which he called "a dirtier, filthier habit than spitting on the floor," he lit a cigarette and took a puff or two. Then, seeing another prank to practise, he pitched his cap on to the table, and, bending down, broke the nibs of each of the Squire's seven quill pens, and put his pen-knife into the fire. "With luck," he said to himself, "I shall hear my prospective pa swear while I compromise his favourite daughter."

Having done this, as he thought, neatly, he went out of the room into the hall, where he paused to look at one of the newspapers on the table. He heard a murmur of conversation from the dining-room, which was up a few stairs to his left. Voices sounded at some distance down the corridor in the kitchen quarter, as maids went and came to and from the hoist with dishes. All upstairs and in the other rooms was silent. "It is perfectly safe," he thought; "I may as well saunter up and ensconce myself in Carrie's room."

He sauntered slowly up, enjoying the excitement of the game, and not in the least fearful of any consequences. "I'm going to have Carrie," he said. "Some women can't be won, they have to be taken. She's one of them. Her mind's only wax: if I only stamp it hard enough with my seal, she'll bear no other till death. I shall hide in her room; when she comes in, I'll lock the door and take her; and if she squeals I'll stop her." He heard no noise of anyone upstairs. As he reached the head of the staircase the clock in the hall rang out its pretty chime for the half-hour. He looked up and down the corridor; no one was there.

As a man's hat will often show his poverty sooner than his suit, so will the upper floor of his house. This corridor had once been painted white; the white was now like a yellow ivory, full of little cracks. The carpet was a red rappy plain cloth, much worn. "Out at toes and elbows, my prospective pa," he commented. "He won't want to prosecute such a golden son-in-law as me."

He looked up and down the corridor once more. A bathroom door was half open, showing a towel-horse, with a towel trembling in the draught. All the other doors were closed on both sides. He counted the doors: "One at the end, for Michael, deceased in Arizona; one, next to it, for Lou, very untidy; one in the middle, for my little love-bird; that's the door, and here I go."

He went to the third door, took the handle quietly and firmly, opened it, slipped in, closed it behind him, and found himself facing Miss Jane Harridew, dressed in a tweed walking suit. He had an instantaneous sense of a grim little room with many books and an iron bed as harsh as a monk's pallet.

"What are you doing here, sir?" she asked.

"Oh, Miss Harridew," he said coolly, "will you come down at once? Your father's had a stroke or something in the dining-room."

"What?" she said. For one half-second she was deceived: then she saw that he was lying. "You impudent liar," she said. "Leave this house."

"No need to cut up crusty, Jane," he said.

A bell-pull against the wall was within two feet of Jane's hand; before he had even noticed that it was there, she had pulled it twice violently.

"Drop that bell-pull," he said.

"I have rung," she answered. "You will be shown out."

"Shall I?" he said. "Shall I, my Jane?" With a quick step backwards he locked the door. He tried to pull out the key, but it would not come. "Now, my Jane," he said, "that's all the good it does you. Now we're locked in for the night, eh?"

She had a slim, heavy walking-cane of some tough black African wood. She always carried it to her Sunday schools, because she could interest the children with it, by showing them that it would not float. "Open that door," she said.

"I won't, my charmer," he said.

She struck at him with the stick, but he caught her by the wrist. "Let me go," she said.

There came a hurry of feet along the corridor: the little upstairs maid, who adored Miss Harridew, knocked at the door and tried the handle.

"Ask Mr. Harridew and Mr. Childrey to come," Jane called. Vaughan caught her wrist and wrenched it,

schoolboy fashion. "Chuck it," he said. "Don't you go raising the house on me, my lovely Jane. What, raise the house on an old friend, who's going to be your brother?"

"Could I get you anything, Miss Harridew?" the girl asked.

"Call Mr. Harridew at once," Jane repeated. The girl tried the handle again. "Run away, girl," Vaughan called. "Don't come bothering here, but run away."

"Fetch Mr. Harridew," Jane called again. The girl was young and scared. She did not know what to do, so shifted from foot to foot, and tried the handle again. Jane tugged again at the bell-pull. Vaughan swung her away from it, but she held on to it, and dragged it after her out of the plaster: it struck a glass on the wash-hand-stand, and smashed it. The maid outside gave a little cry at the noise. She ran to the head of the stairs calling little silly calls. "Now, sir, you will soon see!" Jane said.

"Shall I soon see?" he repeated, chucking her under the chin. She slapped his face with her left hand and struck him with her stick.

"You silly old hen," he said angrily. "If you weren't so blue in the leg I'd ravish you for that."

The voice of an older maid, half-way up the stairs, cried, "Whatever is it, Teeny?"

"There's a man there. They're fighting," Teeny cried.

Jane wrenched herself clear from Vaughan, caught her mirror and flung it to the floor with a crash.

"Why ever didn't you say, instead of squalling?" the elder maid said. She rushed to the door and tried it violently.

"It's locked," Teeny cried. "Oh, isn't it awful!"

"Awful, a fiddlestick," the elder maid said. "Go call Mr. Harridew." She herself knew well what to do.

The next door to Jane's door (the fourth from the end) was the door to Carrie's room. Jane's room, which had once been a dressing-room attached to it, opened into it. Mall, the elder maid, a very big, strong country-woman, darted into Carrie's room, snatched a water-jug from the basin, and flung open the connecting door between the two rooms. Vaughan was trying now to get clear. There he was in the grip of Jane, trying to trip her or to wrench her away, and by no means minding if he hurt her in the process. Mall surveyed the scene for perhaps two seconds. "Now, then," she said; "what's all this?" and brought the jug, mouth downwards, on to Vaughan's head, splashing him somewhat and drenching Jane. Vaughan wrenched clear from Jane, shouldered Mall aside, and stepped into Carrie's room. Mall struck at him and clutched at him. He seized Carrie's easy-chair and swung it between them, so that Mall fell over it. In an instant, he was out of the room into the corridor.

Here, on the instant, he knew that his retreat was cut, for already at the foot of the stair was a purple and panting Squire muttering dreadful things across a mouthful of damson tart. Childrey was coming, too. And on the instant there came an overwhelming sense of what all this might mean to him; he might be charged with burglary, felonious intent, assault, attempted rape, attempted murder. He might have years in prison. Here they were coming: all the house, Carrie and all, the kitchen staff, everybody, and Mall and Jane at his heels.

"If they get me, the going'll be rough," he thought. "They'll tear me like a carcase fit for hounds."

There was only one way for him to go: that was hard upstairs to the upper story. He went up those stairs like the devil going through Athlone ("in standing leps"). He banged his head on something on his way, cursed the thing, whatever it was, and came out on the bare top corridor, with servants' rooms on each side. There seemed to be no escape from thence. "I'm damned if they're going to take me," he muttered.

There was an open window at the west end of the corridor: he ran to this, swung himself up to it and peered out. As he knew, there was a drop from thence of some fifteen feet on to the leads of the house's western annex. It looked a fearful drop, but any port in a storm. He got on to the window-ledge: something in his knickerbockers caught and tore; skin came off his knuckle: something else tore. Someone cried: "He's getting through the window. Quick, Annie, call the stable; call the gardeners; ring the firebell. Joe, Joe, ring the firebell." He heard hurried feet clattering across the yard to the stable: the bell gave an uncertain jangle; but by this time he was hanging by his hands. He steadied himself and let himself drop down towards the leads.

It seemed to be a full minute before he reached the leads. He came down heavily, with several feelings that he was badly hurt. "Now the garden staff will bag me," he thought bitterly. "And listen to all their beastly dogs." He picked himself up; his riding muscle was gone; there was a pain in his right elbow and in his left knee. He dragged himself to the parapet, and took the gutter-pipe as a ladder. He was much cut, barked, and smutted; on his way down he lost both hold and footing, and came down to the earth. Dust and rotten leaves came over

him and got into his eyes. "I'm beastly badly hurt," he thought; "and all my nerve's gone. And by George! it's prison if I'm caught. This is what a chap gets for love."

He set off into the shrubbery as fast as his wrenched muscles would let him move. "If they set the dogs after me, I'm done," he thought. As he ran by a standard rose he wrenched out its iron stake as a weapon. "The first dog will get this," he muttered. "But, by George! flight's my only hope." He got past the ornamental water into the copse without pursuit, and breathed a little more freely. His nerve was gone, though. "I must leg it to Paris," he muttered. "If I can get the 2.35 at Condicote I can get across Channel, somehow."

Just outside the copse he was hailed by one of a couple of ditchers. "Been tossed by a bull, mister?" the man asked.

"You go to hell!" he answered. He set off in his limping run again. "If I get safe to France," he thought, "that peroxide blonde may marry whatever lout she wants to. No more love-affairs for me."

He had to run about a mile to the entrance to his stable-yard. When he reached it there was his man Privett talking to another man; he knew at once that the two were talking about his escapade, and that they knew all about it, and more besides. He knew how news travels in the country and what measure of the truth goes with it.

"Put the trap to," he said to Privett.

"Now, sir?" Privett asked.

"Yes, now. Straightaway."

"Aren't you going to have your lunch, sir?"

"Damn your cheek," Vaughan said. "Get the trap put to."

"Which of the horses would you like, please, sir?"

"Don't stand jawing; do what you're told. Take Cotte."

As he turned into his house, he thought, but was not certain, that Privett said something about the coppers being hot. At any other time he would have had Privett's coat for it, but this was not the time.

As he entered his hall and looked at himself in the glass, to see what sort of a pickle he was in, his maid, Anna, appeared for the same reason, though she asked him if he would be taking lunch. "No," he said; "clear out of here."

"I'm only asking what's my duty," she said.

"You go and ask it somewhere else," he said. He brushed past her and ran upstairs, and heard her give something between a snort and a giggle as he went. "That proves that my pants are torn behind," he thought. "I was afraid they were." They were.

In his room he skinned off his clothes quicker than ever before. He was in a filthy mess. He washed and changed, and tossed things into a bag. "Lucky for me I've got plenty of money in the house," he muttered. All his fingers seemed to be thumbs, and his thumbs had had their skin knocked off. "They'll gaol me," he kept muttering. "By George! is that the policeman? If Jane charges me with rape I'm done for."

Suddenly he sat down, began to tremble and couldn't stop. "Here, this won't do," he said. "I must pull myself together." There was brandy in his tantalus; he took a dram of half a tumbler, neat, then a second, then a third, and felt his nerve come back.

He put on his coat, jammed his hat sideways on his

head, and went out of his door to the trap; the fast mare, Cocotte, was tossing her head with a jingle in front of the impassive Privett.

"Take this damned bag," he said, "and give me the reins. I've got to catch a train." The drink was surging in him in waves of valour. He was not into his seat before Cocotte, who was already up to her collar, was off, in a half-bolt, which flung him backwards, swearing. He missed his gate-post by about half an inch, swung the mare to the right, lashed into her with the whip, and set her at the long hill, full gallop.

"Mare's very fit, sir," Privett said.

"She wants more work than I've been giving her," Vaughan growled.

At the top of the long hill Cocotte came to terms; glancing back Vaughan saw a yellow dog-cart on the road behind him.

"Mr. Harridew's cart, sir," Privett said.

"I see it is," Vaughan said. "Who's in it?"

"Mr. Harridew and another gentleman, sir."

"What other gentleman?"

"I can't see, sir."

Vaughan felt sure that it was the local policeman come for himself. He growled to himself that he would have a run for his money. "Come up, you she-devil!" he called to the mare, laying into her with the whip. "You damned peroxide blonde, see if you can't pay your corn for once."

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Two hundred yards from the station, the smoke of the express gave him something else to race. However fresh

Cocotte had been at the start, she had had enough as she came reeking and lunging up the station approach; there was no sign of the yellow dog-cart.

Vaughan stumbled down from his seat, rocking from the gallop and the brandy, and in pain from his sprains. A porter snatched his bag. "Come on, sir, you'll just do it," he said. "Buy your ticket in the train." He had Vaughan into a carriage, pitched the bag in, and slammed the door upon him while the train was gathering way. Vaughan fell to one side on to the seat, then picked himself up and beamed at the other occupants of the carriage, an elderly clergyman and his wife.

"I did that rather nishely," he said, panting. "Jolly near thing, what? Still, I did it. Djer know if I can gerra drink othish train?"

"I do not know, sir," the clergyman answered. "You appear to have had a sufficiency already."

"Quirra mishtake, 'shure you," Vaughan said.

"If you will go into the corridor," the clergyman said, "you may find a train attendant who will inform you."

Vaughan said that that was a bright idea, what, and went forth to look for him. As he went, a lurch of the train sent him breathing warm brandy over the lady. "All ri', my lil peroxide blonde," he said. "Thish railway linesh disgraish; perfectly 'palling. Shall write to *Timesh*."

So gurgling, he got across to Paris, where his sprains were treated. After a few days he found a peroxide blonde in that city, who consoled him for what he had endured.

Vaughan's attempt upset George's lunch at the Manor.

He came away, and rode over to Mourne End to fetch a pad of the fox for Carrie. He found the meuse where the fox had lain; it still reeked with the scent, but the fox had arisen and gone. George took a little piece of stone from the meuse and had it set in gold as a brooch for Carrie in memory of their hunt together.

Being anxious about Steer he rode over to see him, but found that he had gone to London, his housekeeper did not know for how long. No address had been left; only the news that Miss Enid (Steer's sister), and Mr. Tim (his brother), would be there in a few days, and that Miss Enid would forward any letters. "I'm afraid it is only too true," George thought. "He has gone back to sea, just when he had his heart's desire of shooting, fishing and hunting. I shall miss him more than I can say. Who else is there, except Carrie, for whom I really care, in all this country?"

Somehow, he rode home wanting Carrie a good deal more than he wanted Steer; yet when he was at home, in his lonely house, the thought that Steer had gone was almost more than he could bear. "It's all my fault, too," he said. "I ought to have seen more of him, and tided him over this bad time. This being rivals ought not to have put us apart; but it has." He knew, then, how much Steer meant to him. "It isn't as though we wrote to each other much; we're not writing sorts," he said. "But we are jolly good friends, and I had hoped to have him here and do things with him."

He went up to bed, but could not sleep, for the thought of Steer. The wind had risen during the evening, so that the near-by trees were swaying. "He'll be out somewhere in the wind," he thought; "beating out of the Channel,

with water breaking on board." "Scooping up the dishfuls," Steer had called it.

Then he thought of the beginning of their friendship, in far-away days, when they had been seven; when old Harpit, Steer's father, a scholar, who translated Homer, and kept bees, and grew roses, had so often asked him over to stay. Someone had said that old Harpit had once been in love with Mrs. Childrey, George's mother. He thought of this now, and wondered if it were true. It was very likely true, for the kindness of the old man (old to a child) had been beyond all measure.

From thinking of old Harpit, he fell to thinking of his mother, whom he remembered none too well. "Very beautiful," they all said she was; "everybody was in love with her." Somebody still was, for there were always flowers on her grave. "I wish that she could have lived for me to love her," he thought.

After this came more thoughts of Steer, with wild regret, that he had not kept more near to him. He remembered something that Steer had said seven years before: "There are three times in a chap's youth, a time of home, then a time of friendship, then a time of marriage."

Somehow this third time had broken in upon the second and left a desolation.

CHAPTER XI

A FEW days later he received an invitation from Sir Edward, asking him to come to lunch and to see the model dairy, but saying that unfortunately he, Sir Edward, would not be there to welcome him, owing to a political meeting elsewhere.

On the appointed Saturday he set out to drive to Killdown, in the trap behind Merry Grig, starting from home at a little before noon. He stopped at the Fromes to ask that a bottle of cough mixture might be sent up for Mrs. Baldock.

"You want a bottle of Green Seal?" young Frome said. "Right-ho. Are you going far to-day?"

"Out to Killdown."

"It's going to be pretty bad weather," young Frome said. "It was snowing hard in London, when I left this morning by the express."

"There's something coming, evidently," George said. "But the ground's warm from all this mildness; it can't lie."

"No, it won't lie," young Frome said.

An old man, who was waiting for some ointment to be made up, joined in at this.

"No," he said. "It won't stay long:

"When Candlemas Day is past and gone
Snow lies on a hot stone."

"Very likely it will snow itself out before it gets here," young Frome said.

"It won't do that," George said, "we shall get some of it; but I daresay it won't be much."

He drove on after this, away into the Godsdawn, past the "Tod and Tickler." On the open down, away from the woodland, he had a better view of the sky, which was darkening in the southeast, and throwing out a whitishness above the darkness. At the same time he felt an unpleasant rawness in the air.

"Coming on fast, sir," a road-mender said.

"Coming on too fast to be much," George said.

"Long foretold, long last,
Short notice, soon past."

After he had driven on, he remembered how Steer had said that some of the worst of the winters' gales begin with a rapid fall and the wind in the southeast. He touched up Merry Grig and drove on to Killdown, where Sir Edward's lady gave him lunch.

"It looks like a storm," he said.

"The paper says unsettled," she said. "But I noticed just now that I could hear the Coln St. Evelyn chimes at one o'clock, which is generally a sign of bad weather here. I always feel that people in the north are meant to hibernate in the winter, like Polar bears and dormice."

However, she was a pleasant hostess, a pretty girl was staying with her, and the lunch was very good. George was not free to go out into the yard until after two o'clock.

"You'll come back to the house for tea, before you go?" his hostess said.

"No, thank you," he said. "No, I must go home before the storm begins."

"Why should you?" she said. "You'd much better stay here for the night."

"No, indeed, thanks," he said; "I must go home."

When he went out to see the farm, the darkness of grey had advanced half-way across the heaven; the rawness of the air struck home, so that all life felt its edge.

"We're in for a storm," he said to the bailiff.

"My leg began to itch in bed this morning," the bailiff said. "That's always a sure sign to me. Rain or snow; it never fails."

The cows, the model barton and big covered yard were deeply interesting to George. It was all being done from a sense of style, without thought of any return, which did not please the bailiff. George gathered that the bailiff did not care for cows, and did not hold with Sir Edward's theories. "A lot of new-fangled stuff, since you ask me, Mr. Childrey," he said. "You'll never get really clean milk, if you try a hundred years, and what if you do? It's the muck, very like, that does people the good, nine cases out of ten, only they don't know it."

"I'd better be off now," George said. "I want to get across the Godsdowen before the snow's bad."

"But, sir," the bailiff said. "Sir Edward said, 'Be sure he sees the piggeries.' I promised you should, sir. And 'twon't take you more than a very few minutes. We get all our brood sows on gratings, so that they shan't overlie the farrow. And we got a boar, the Gloucester Bustem, that people come a hundred mile to see. And it won't take you but a minute."

But the Gloucester Bustem and the life of which he was the centre were deeply interesting things, not to be taken in a minute. It was after three o'clock before

George had finished in the piggeries; even then the bailiff had other wonders. "You'd stop to see the incubators, Mr. Childrey?" he said; "and what we call our Artificial Hens, that keep the chicks in eiderdown? And for the bigger chicks we've got an electric clucker that scrats the earth up and teaches 'em to scat. You didn't ought to go till you've seen them."

However, George felt that he could see them at some other time, and in many other places: the sky was now wholly overcast, and a few very small pellets of hard snow were drifting in the stillness slantingly, in a way which he did not at all like. "Thanks, but I'll get back as soon as you can let me have the trap," he said. "This is going to be a bad fall."

"It'll be different weather on the other side of the down," the bailiff said. "It's never the same both sides. The slopes tip off the air just as they do the water."

George was less sure; he wished that he were already on the other side of the down, and that it were so. Sir Edward's lady appeared, shivering in her furs. "Now, Mr. Childrey," she said, "I can't let you go without tea, or something more warming. Do come in and refresh yourself before your drive."

"No, indeed, thank you," he said. "I must go at once."

"I really don't like your going," she said; "it is so very threatening and the downs are so dangerous in a deep snow. Won't you think better of it and stop till the morning? We will make you very comfortable, and my husband will be back by five, and he would love to talk to you about these things."

"You are awfully kind," he said, "and I'd love to; but I must go before the drifts have begun to form."

"It is most perishingly cold," she said. "Have you a rug in your trap?"

"No," he said; "I never need a rug."

"Do let me persuade you, for this once, to take a rug," she said. "I am sensitive to cold, from having lived long in hot climates, but I never remember to have felt the air so raw as it is now. So take this plaid; it is woven from our own sheep's wool, and very warm. You can send it back by post some time, or bring it when you come again."

He did not want the rug, but took it and thanked her.

Glad as he was to be turned for home, Merry Grig was gladder. As he turned out of the farm-yard into the lane, he realized that he was driving within a few points of the wind's eye. The pellets of hard snow were falling into his face, especially upon his left cheek. There were not many of them yet, but they were more than they had been a few minutes before. "They'll be troublesome to drive through, if they get much worse," he said. "And they're going to be much worse. I don't think I ever saw a more hideous-looking sky." By the little clock in front of him he saw the time: twenty-five minutes to four.

The evil of the air smote into him as he drove, while the pellets increased in number minute by minute. He was not conscious of any wind, yet most of the pellets struck, as it seemed, from the one point, slantingly across his face. Soon the road, which had been soft that morning, bore a powdering of white, and became crisper under the wheels, while from minute to minute the numbers of the pellets increased with the variety of their direction. It was then bad going, for the snow balled hard on the hoofs, and was slippery.

Presently, as he drove, he felt an urge in the air (more of an impulse of the storm than wind) in which the snow pellets increased from many into multitude. They came at him now from all points, they came patting ceaselessly upon his face, pecking at his eyes, and getting down his collar. Bent as he was, with his hat jammed down upon his brow, he found it difficult to see to drive. It was fast becoming dark. The snow was now falling in such quantity that often he could not see the hedge by the roadside. It was a lonely road at the best of times; he saw no living soul. "Hold on a minute, old boy," he said to his horse. "Come back here; stop . . . I'll have to light my lamps. Come, stop you."

He had some difficulty in tying the horse, who wanted to get home. The snow was already deep on the road. There was not yet any sensible wind, but just in front of where he stopped, a drift was floating over the road across a gap in the hedge. This drift looked like a living person, or procession of persons with a purpose; it advanced and advanced. "I don't know where the devil I've got to," he said. "I suppose this is somewhere about the Grey Sisters, a mile the wrong side of 'Tod and Tickler.' I'm making bad time; the poor beast slips so. It'll be no joke on the Godsdown."

He contrived to get his lamps lit; and what was harder, to hold Merry Grig while he got back into the trap. Again he set out into the storm, which was now dark with the multitude of the falling flakes and threatening an utter darkness. He heard the scrunch of the snow balling on Merry Grig's feet, the jingle of the harness, the muffled noise of the wheels, and a sort of moan in the air. Every now and then Merry Grig slipped a little;

then he would chuck him up with the rein and call to him. He was a good, game, strong young horse, eager to get home. "Come along, good boy," George kept saying. "Up now, come up, old son." But eager as he was, the going was all slip and shuffle.

"I don't know this road over-well," George thought; "I hope I'm on the road. There's no knowing. We ought to have begun the climb to the Tod by this." Soon afterwards he recognized a blasted tree, and caught the noise of falling water, and knew where he was. A trap with lit lamps surged out of the darkness and went past him, going in the opposite direction. He had a glimpse of things gleaming, and of a caped driver like a snow man. The thing lurched and was gone, making hardly any noise, either because the snow deadened the wheels or because the night was now full of the snow's myriad footfalls, that trod out other sounds. Coming round a corner, George saw a light in a farm-building near the road. "That's splendid," he said. "Come up, old son, we're close to the Tod; we'll soon be bowling down the Gods-down." It was a steep pull here, so he slipped down to walk.

Unlike many of the horses of that time, Merry Grig showed no wish to stop at the inn. He went past it without a glance while George walked uphill beside him. The lights in the inn were comforting; soon they dropped out of sight into the ever-thickening, beating snow, which was now coming out of a wailing heaven on a beginning wind.

Looking back downhill towards the inn, now lost in the whirling and the darkness, George had an instant of hesitation. "Would it not be wiser to stop at the inn? This

is a bad fall, not yet near its worst, and you are advancing into it. You have a long way to go, and the drifts on the down may be terrible."

However, he was young and Merry Grig still had his ears cocked. He was enjoying this tussle with the storm. So far it had been nothing but a tussle. In all storm there is an exhilaration to the soul. "I'll go on," George said. "I'm not going to be stopped by a little snow." Soon he was walking between the woodlands, which screened him from the storm, but moaned aloft as though the wind had risen.

Presently, as the trap lurched heavily to one side, a wheel having gone into the ditch, the light of the lamps was cast upon a hawthorn-tree bent by the weight of snow till its top touched ground. Some gap in the wood or eddy of the wind there had heaped the snow upon it in more than a fair share. "There'll be some trees lost to-night," George said, "if it's as bad as this already." In the moment of pause, while the trap drew out of the ditch, he heard the unmistakable sound of trees on either hand snapping from the weight upon them. "It'll be a record fall," he said. "But come on, old son, we'll beat it, you and I." He went on, and began to sing the old song of "*Marie trempe ton pain*."

The lonely road that had been dark on both hands with woodland, suddenly seemed to lose its cover, and to shudder. "Here we are at the Godsdawn," George said, as he climbed back into the trap. "And now we're in for it."

They were not in for it for a few minutes, till they were clear of the shelter of some high ground to their left. Then quite suddenly the nature of the storm intensified;

the air seemed so full of snow that there was nothing to breathe. To go on was to fight against a devil. Nonetheless, they went on, at a snail's pace, slipping and pulling up. Presently Merry Grig stopped. George urged him, but he would not go on. "Now, what the devil's wrong?" George growled, as he clambered down. "What is it, old son? Have you picked up a stone, or are you blind from snow in the blinkers?"

Unfortunately, it was neither of these things, but the fact that his way was barred by a low stone wall, heaped with snow, just in front of him. "Golly," George said, "we're off the road! We're right off the road and somewhere out on the down; heaven knows which side." He remembered then that somewhere about there the downland had a quaking patch into which sheep and drunkards sometimes strayed. "It won't do to get into that!" he thought. There was nothing for it but to take out one of the lamps and follow back upon his tracks until he reached the road again. He felt a real relief in turning his face from the beating of the snow, but was a little shaken to see how quickly his tracks had filled. "Golly," he thought, "if I'm not careful, I'll get lost out here."

It was not easy to find the road in that high down where the track was fenceless. George scraped away snow at point after point, till he found the metalling. "Old boy," he said to the horse, "I didn't think that a horse would play that kind of trick. You ought to know better; I suppose it was somehow my fault, but I'll walk beside you, old man, henceforth." He put back the lamp and took Merry Grig's head. "Come on, my poor old son," he said. "*The Garde ne se rend pas*. I won't turn back

to the Tod; but if you'll get me down into the vale, we'll see about stopping at the Coach Horse."

A gusty rage was now moving in the darkness, flinging out snow as though it were the tatterings of a broken world. They could only crawl forward, groping and floundering in drifts often up to the knee. George, as leader, had to stop after each few steps, to scrape with his foot, and then to feel with his hand, to make sure that he was still upon the road. There were no landmarks in that bare down, now all one white under the hurling of the fury. He was not now enjoying it, but to go back was against his principles. "I don't know where I've got to," he kept saying, "but as long as we're on the road, we shall be all right. Pull up, old son," he said to the horse. "When we get to the Cheddesdon Turn, there'll be telegraph-posts to guide us, and then it won't be so bad."

The snow seemed to cry against him: "But you're not on the right road at all. You're going straight for Gods-down Bog, where we shall hide you and the peat will pickle you."

After half an hour of this, George felt the storm gather markedly in might, and drive against them with a multitudinous power that took away the heart. "Now, old boy," he said to the horse, "this is something we can hardly make head against. And I'm afraid I've led you wrong. We ought to have reached Cheddesdon Turn by this. Where on this wide earth are we?"

He bethought him of a little compass which hung from his watch-chain. It was a poor little thing, but by the light of the lamp it showed him that he was heading south. "That is how the road runs," he said. "And the

wind is a bit to the east of that. We may be right; but where is the Turn? And then, there are those barrows near the road. Surely, I should see them?"

There was no seeing anything except multitudinous flying fragments coming inexhaustibly out of darkness into his lamplight. The strain of trying to see, in that whirl of snow, which beat continually into the eyes, was the thing that quenched the spirit.

"It's no good stopping," George said. "We must get on; every step counts. Stopping only wastes good strength."

They crawled on for another quarter of a mile without coming to any telegraph-posts. Then suddenly, with a sidelong slither and crash, the horse, George and the trap went over into a deeply drifted ditch. The near light was instantly quenched in snow, and the near shaft snapped.

George was dragged down by the horse, but kept a tight hold of the rein, and kept the horse's head down. He floundered in a sort of pit of snow until he found a footing. Merry Grig's feet were scraping wildly for foothold.

"Keep still, you old fool," he said. He sat on the horse's head and groped with his wet hands into sodden pockets for his knife.

As he tried to open the blade, to cut the horse free, there came a kind of glee into the storm. It ran at him as at a mark, heaping and twisting the whiteness about him as though to engulf and smother. "You're very strong," it seemed to say, "but you are only one, and we are many, many, many; we are going to be too many for you." He saw, as it were, slabs of it cake over his remain-

ing lamp. "By Jove," he muttered; "if I don't get up and get the horse up pretty soon, I do believe we may be done for." He spat the snow out of his mouth and got to work. "By Jove," he said, "snow's not going to beat me, nor get my horse." He groped for leather after leather and cut it through, going over them in order in his mind. A struggle from the horse at one point knocked the knife out of his hand so that he had to grope for it in the snow. "Jove, this is a lovely night!" he said. "A real spring evening."

As he groped and hove and cut, he felt that he was like a half-tide rock, with flood advancing. There came, as it were, sudden leaps or runs of snow, which gathered as they sped, burst upon him, and flung their spray. Snow heaped against him as sand heaps against a wreck in a tide-way. "Now, if this old fool bolts," George said, "he'll find soft falling wherever he comes down next. You're clear now, old son; so up you come: stand up." He hove and cheered, and got him to his feet. The horse swayed and surged as though about to bolt. "Quiet, old boy," George said. "It's all right. It's all right." The horse whinnied and instead of trying to bolt, shied back into the drift. George got him back on to the road, and with his left hand scraped the snow from the lamp. "What's the matter, old son?" he said. "There, old man. Cheer up now, calm yourself." The horse was in terror and trembling; and some of the terror passed into George. At that instant, there came a cry from somewhere in the snow in front of him.

It was not a bird's cry, but it did not sound human. It was a cry without words from some want or anguish.

It was repeated, while Merry Grig snorted, swerved away and bore George backwards.

"What is it?" George cried, as he steadied the horse. "Who's there?" Someone or something was there, yet who, save Death or a ghost, could be on the Godsdown on such a night?

Something formed and white rose out of the unformed darkness into the light of the lamp. He saw gleaming eyes set in the whiteness of a face. Nothing but the horror of his scare, which made him hang on to the horse, kept Merry Grig from breaking loose. In the light of the lamp he saw what he thought was the ghost of Carrie, surging up from the grave in her shroud.

"Good Heaven!" he gasped. Then fiercely in his terror he said: "What in the wide earth are you?"

Then in an instant, to his amazement and relief, he saw that it was Maid Margaret.

"Good Lord," he said. "You scared me then. What in the world brings you here?"

"Oh, Mr. Childrey," she said, "I'm glad it's you. I've been trying to reach Dr. Spang at Monks Ebsbury. My niece is very, very ill."

"Couldn't Tom have gone?" he asked.

"He's in London," she said. "And I couldn't send Ianthe."

"Surely one of the village men would have gone."

"I couldn't get to the village," she said. "I tried that, but it is worse there than here; the path is all drifted deep. I had to try to get to the doctor; it's the only chance for her; so I came this way. But it's so much worse than I ever thought it could be."

"It couldn't be much worse," he said. "Look in the trap, behind the lamp there, you'll see a plaid; that will keep a little of the snow off. I can't help you put it on; the horse will bolt if I do. How long have you been out in this?"

"It was after dark when I started," she said. "What is the time now?"

"It must be after seven. There's a clock in the trap somewhere, under the snow."

"Where am I now, exactly?" she asked.

"Near Cheddesdon Turn, I think. Between that and the 'Tod and Tickler.' "

"Oh, dear," she said. "I thought I was over the down on the way into Ebsbury; nearly there. Annie will be dead, and the little girl alone with her."

"Come, courage," he said. "Listen. We'd better get back to the 'Tod and Tickler.' I'll ride for Dr. Spang from there. It's not so bad on that side, anything like. Do you think you could mount my horse from the trap? I'll hold him."

"I'll try."

By clambering on to the trap while he held the horse she contrived to mount. With his left hand George managed to unship the still burning lamp. "This is the blindest wild night I was ever adrift in," he said. "And no sign yet of any shift into the south. Hold the lamp a moment, will you? while I get the plaid about you."

This was contrived with some difficulty; then they set on uphill, with the gale pelting on their backs, George holding the lamp in his left hand, and gripping Merry

Grig with his right. "The poor horse wants to get back to his stable," he said.

"We all do that," she said. "But for us there isn't any stable."

They went on for what seemed a long time, until suddenly they were out of the storm and stopped dead, in front of a wall of earth and stone.

"Look at this," George said. "We're off the road again, somewhere."

"I know where this is," she said. "You've turned to the left of the road, into the quarry track. This is Gods-down old pit. It is less than a mile to the inn now."

Going back on their trail for fifty yards, they found that she was right. As they came again into the road George faced the storm and felt that there had come a shifting of the wind into the south.

"It's nearing its height, now," he said. "I've never known such snow in this country. When we reach the inn I'll go on for Spang, and I'll get the inn-man to go back to the village. He could get the rector and his wife to go out to the Bince until we come."

"I must go back," she said.

"You're just about exhausted," he said. "You'll have to wait till this snow's stopped. But I'll get someone to go, be sure."

They went floundering slowly on. "We mustn't go past the Tod," George said: "we're quite likely to, in this snow."

"Have you seen Mr. Harpit lately, Mr. Childrey?" she asked.

"Mr. Harpit, no; I'm afraid he has gone back to sea."

"Do you remember now where we met?" she asked.

"No; I'm afraid I don't," he said, "I can't. Where was it? When was it? You said thirteen or fourteen years ago."

"Yes. On the river bank at Tatchester, when you and Mr. Harpit were sailing a new kind of boat."

"I remember the new kind of boat," George said.

"So do I," she said. "She was called the *Dainty Dolly*."

"She was," George said. "We were boys then: Mr. Harpit was down at Southampton on board a ship which was being inspected. A lot of her life-buoys were condemned, and he begged for six of them, and brought them home, and we tacked planks on to them and rigged a sort of mast, and sailed across the Tant."

"I saw you," she said. "Now do you remember me?"

"No."

"Do you remember a dog?"

"Yes, I remember something about a dog."

"Don't you remember you plunged in and pulled him out?"

"I believe I did," he said. "Was the dog yours?"

"Yes, my fox-terrier, Tip. He swam across after you, and couldn't get out at the other side, and wouldn't swim back. I thought he would be drowned, but you saved him. You don't remember my thanking you?"

"I dimly remember somebody. So that was you? I shouldn't have recognized you. Were you living in Tatchester then?"

"I was being taught there, by Miss Pascoe."

"I've heard of her," he said. "She is a great character."

"She opened many new worlds to me," Maid Margaret said.

"Here we are at the Tod," George said, stopping the horse, "and everybody in bed this last hour, to save candle."

CHAPTER XII

GEORGE borrowed a horse from the inn-keeper, and rode on alone to fetch Dr. Spang. Before he reached Monks Ebsbury he felt the wind shifting further into the west, and the storm changing into rain. As he came back with the doctor to the Tod, the world was full of the tinkle of running waters. Even the rain had ceased; the body of the storm was rolling on across England, and the heaven before him was clear with stars. Soon it was a beautiful night, with all things visible in the snow. From every wood and spinney there came the thump or rustle of snow falling from the boughs. George saw that many saplings were bowed right down. "Nice lambing weather," he thought. "I wonder how many ewes have died on the Godsdowen since nightfall."

The doctor drove Maid Margaret home to the Bince. George rode on to the village, to rouse up the rector and his wife. He found that they had gone to the Bince in the very heart of the storm, and were still there. "But you can't go by the path," the housekeeper said. "You'll have to go round, oh, a long way, by Peterses."

Being anxious to see it out, he went round by Peterses. and reached the Bince at two in the morning. The lights were burning, the door was open, and every gutter ran with the thaw. Several people were there, moving about. Maid Margaret came to him presently, as he sat on the kitchen-table by the light of an old open lantern. "My

little niece is dead, Mr. Childrey," she said. "I felt it in my heart that she had died, just when I met you."

"I am sad for you," he said, "and for the little girl, Ianthe, and for Tom."

"She could never have lived and been happy," Maid Margaret said. "But I loved her all the more for that."

"You made her happy," George said.

"She knew that she was not like other children," she said. "And now all that is wiped away; she is free. She used to pray for death, poor child."

"Is there anything that I can do for you?" George asked. "In Condicote or Tatchester?"

"No, nothing, thank you," she said. "But may I not bring you food or wine? You have been out all these hours, helping me, when but for you I might have died in the snow."

"No, nothing for me, thank you," he said. "I must go. But if I can help you, I hope you'll tell me."

"Thank you," she said; "thank you, Mr. Childrey." As she shook hands she looked at him with a deep gaze that meant to record his face forever.

George, riding on, now slipping, now splashing, heard the owls, and then the cocks. He did not reach home until daylight. The storm is still spoken of in those parts as "The Fury." Much of the snow was away by the next night, for the ground was warm, and the rain swept it, but some of the deeper drifts could be seen on the Gods-down at the end of April.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER some days George had a letter from Steer, which sent him with a sad heart up to the Manor to see Carrie.

"Carrie," he said, "I've got rather a horrid job, which I'd much rather not do, but as it is asked by Steer, who was always my great friend here, I'm going to ask you to let me go through with it."

"Steer Harpit," she said, with a sinking heart. "All right. Go on, George; what is it?"

"He has gone back to sea," George said. "He asked me to read you this letter."

The letter was written in pencil upon a sheet torn from a writing-pad: it had been posted in Swansea.

"DEAR GEORGE (it ran):

"I am sending you this line by the pilot, before we cast off the tug. I've got a job of second mate, going with chalk, Dunquerque to Philadelphia, where I suppose it will be case-oil to Calcutta, and jute home. I want you to read this to Carrie, so that she may know I shan't bother her. Some chaps don't seem able to take a thing as meant. If you would look up Tim at my place some time it would be kind. Well, so long, old man.

"S. H."

"And how long will he be away, George?" Carrie asked.

"A year or eighteen months," he said.

"What is the name of the ship?" she asked.

"He doesn't say," George said. "But the only ship which has left Dunquerque for Philadelphia is the sailing

ship *Cambuscan Bold*, owned by Gillie & Pillis, Liverpool. I telegraphed to them when I got this this morning. They confirmed it; he is on board her."

Carrie looked deeply troubled. "I can't help it, George," she said. "It is not my fault. I never wanted him to care for me. I dreaded it more than I can say, and hoped that he would see it."

"There's not a word of blame," George said. "I hate to have to read such a letter. But he is my oldest friend, and being charged as I am, I couldn't well refuse. Don't be distressed about it."

"But I am, George; deeply distressed. He was so happy in his little house, with his shooting and fishing and hunting; and he so thoroughly loved the country life."

"Yes, but he loved the sea, too," George said. "He'll be settled down to the sea by this time. It will give him the change he needs, and he can probably easily get away if he wants to, before the round voyage is over."

"Yes," she said. "But suppose the sea drowns him before he does get away; then I shall have been the cause."

"Now, come, Carrie," George said; "that's wilful and pessimistic of you. If that happens it will be Destiny, not you. But it won't happen. I believe in Steer's star."

Carrie was not to be comforted. Steer made the sixth man made wretched by her beauty since Christmas Day. George left her sitting staring at the fire, profoundly miserable, asking, as Blake once asked, "Why was I not born with a different face?" This faculty for making men crazy was an acute distress to her.

She was in this mood of misery, both her sisters being away and an early tea lying untasted on the table beside her, and the light of the sunset on the picture over the mantel, when the door burst suddenly open, and a long-haired, untidy young man, calling her "Carrie," was on his knees before her, adoring her, at a distance of some three yards.

"Oh, Carrie," he was saying, "my adored Carrie!"

It was the Canon's son from Tatchester; the lad whom all called Ethelberta. She shrank away from him.

"I thought you'd gone to Greece with a tutor," she said.

"Yes," he said. "I did go. Oh, yes. I got to Greece all right. But what were the flowers of Greece to the flower of flowers? I couldn't stick the beastly things."

"What about your tutor?" she asked.

"Who? Old Thunderguts? You know, I can't help laughing," the young man said; "I dodged him at Athens. I bribed a chap to give me a job as a steward, so I came in a passenger ship to Marseilles. I expect old Thunderguts is in Athens still, looking for me."

"But what about your father and mother?"

"I don't know," he said. "You must have seen them later than I have."

"You wretched boy," she said. "Do you mean that you have left them in suspense all these days, not knowing where you are?"

"They're all right."

"They're not all right. They are probably half beside themselves, imagining all sorts of things."

"Oh, no, no, no," he broke in. "They're good church people, and adore each other and all that, but they don't

imagine things, they've got no imagination. Only people with a sense of humour have imagination."

"Ethel," she said, "stop being a silly boy and go back at once to your father and mother."

"I'll go presently," he said. "But I'm going to gaze on my Moon first; my Sun and Moon."

"If you mean me," Carrie said, "you're not."

"There was a girl in a tobacconist's, when I was up," he said; "I used to get all my cigarettes from her last term just because she'd got a chin that reminded me of yours."

'You need but lift a pearl-pale hand
And all men's hearts must burn and beat.'

Then Rossetti's consummately lovely thing, 'The Beloved,' or it may be called 'The Bride': what is it but a prophecy of you? Art is always pre-figuring Nature. Shakespeare is obviously wrong, as usual, when he says

'doth Nature store
To show false Art what Beauty was of yore.'

What really happens is that Art makes a statement to show Nature what Beauty will be to-morrow. Nature, the cause, of course, always follows her effect."

"You've told me all that before," Carrie said. "And I don't believe it. Dear Ethel, do be sensible, run home and tell your father and mother that you are back at home; and, oh, please, don't come bothering me. Do understand, dear boy, that I think you are a boy."

"It is that that gives me my value," he said. "For a few precious years I have an unprejudiced outlook and see the obvious truth behind the systems. In a few years, probably, I shall lose this sanity of detachment: I may

even barter it away for some so-called career; for they're always badgering me to take up a profession. I see you for what you are: the Beatrice of the modern Inferno; the music that hushes the fever of the street."

"I won't be called a barrel organ," Carrie said.

"But what can be more consummately lovely?" Ethelberta said. "It is the music, often the only music, that cools the brow of artistic youth in his garret in the slum. It is the swan-song of so many dying souls, dying efforts towards beauty, hopes and pleas."

"Ethel," she said, "you talk more rubbish than anyone I ever met; but I've always liked you because you are nice. Please understand, will you, that I'm not the sort of young woman you think me. I loathe brows that need cooling, and if I could possibly get out of it I would never cool one. Even if I had to, I'd try not to do it in a garret and certainly not in a slum. I'd have the brow into the infirmary first, in case he might be infectious."

"Ah," he said. "There talks the social system; the hereditary complex of twenty-seven generations of squires. I see you beyond all that: I see you for what you are: a white rose upon a banner to carry and to die for. Oh, Carrie, you are so much too white to live in this squirearchy, this 'agrestic kakistocracy'; come with me into the real world among the beautiful people really worth knowing. There are only seven in all London and two of those are in love. You have not really lived, but I can teach you to live; I can give you life, and consecrate my days to leading you by the hand into your fuller nature. Come with one who understands what a real marriage should be; two hand in hand, but one gazing at a star."

All this time he had been on his knees before her; often

with his hands outstretched. He was really kneeling and upon the floor boards, not on any mat. His knees were feeling the strain when Teeny, the maid, came in to fetch the tea things. She was somewhat surprised to see him there, but the ways of the gentry were beyond her comprehension.

"Wait a moment, Teeny," Carrie said. "You'll have some tea, won't you, Ethel?"

"I have renounced tea," Ethelberta said, rising gracefully, and dusting the knees of his trousers. "The instant tea came into Europe art declined. We who look upon ourselves as torch-bearers do not drink tea."

"You may clear then, please, Teeny," Carrie said; so tea was cleared.

"Now, Ethel," Carrie said. "You have been caught being very absurd by the junior housemaid. You have talked great folly to me, knowing quite well that it has been forbidden, and that I loathe it. You have also put your father and mother into very great distress; for which, please remember, they are likely to blame me. Don't interrupt me, Ethel, and don't come any nearer. I am not going to listen to you any longer, nor will I permit you to come here again until I can feel that you are wiser."

"But won't you come with me, Carrie, into the fuller life your nature craves?"

"You know nothing about my nature, Ethel," she said. "And you know nothing about life, whether full or empty."

"I know a lot about love," he said. "As a lover, I rank with Dante. You can know nothing about me till you've read my poems. I've brought them here. 'Pas-

sions of Dawn.' You may laugh, but they're written in my heart's blood."

"I wish you'd keep your heart's blood in its proper place, and put it to its proper use," she said. "I'm not in the least poetical, and I don't want to hear your poems. Put them away, please."

"A good many of them are in prose," he said. "We think that the tyranny of verse has kept art in bondage long enough, and that a prose instrument may be forged, quite as sensitive and far more fluent. Don't you think it might?"

"No, I don't," she said. "I don't want to hear your poems, whether in prose or verse."

"There's one that I am going to ask you to listen to," he said. "It's one of the ones in prose. Usually, I'm afraid I'm too epithetical; when one has such joy in nice selection, the mere goldsmith's work becomes an end in itself. But in this I am trying a new manner which will preserve the old sensuousness, that is of the old ones I used to read to you, and yet depend for its effect on form. It is called 'Queen Helen Sleeps.' " Here he began to read:

"The Spartan sunlight, splitting the gleaming marble, drowns the panthers:

The pennoned bronze, of sentries, declining, droops:

The sail of the purple-fisher droops upon the wickered figs,
and red-clay amphoræ containing wine of Kos:

The horse upon his barley droops.

Within what cedarn darkness closed with the well-fitting bolts
across bronze doors in what dim corridor. . . . "

But at this moment the Canon and his wife were announced, and entered. The Canon's wife clasped Ethelberta to her arms, crying, "Oh, Ethelberta, you naughty,

naughty boy. How could you have been so naughty? Oh, you have given us an anxious week; but thank God, here you are at last." Queen Helen's sleep was interrupted before she had properly reached her bed, which came in the next stanza.

Carrie explained that the meeting had not been sought by her, and that she had done her best to end it.

"Ethel," she said; "now that your father and mother are here, do listen to me once for all. I like you as a nice boy, which I know you really are, when you give up all this poetry and play hockey as you always used to."

"Hockey!" Ethelberta groaned. "What is hockey? Is it a food or a drink?"

"It's a game which you might have got a Blue at," the Canon said, "if you hadn't wasted your time with so many follies."

"I won't call them follies," Carrie said; "because an affection for me was the cause of them."

"Affection!" Ethelberta cried. "A withering passion that burns my soul bare, and you call it affection."

"Ethel," Carrie said, "if you have that withering passion for me . . . if I am, as you say, a Beatrice to you. . . . But I can't use such names as these; I am not like that at all, whatever you think. I'm a humdrum young woman whom you've got into the way of exaggerating. . . . But since I am something to you, Ethel, will you show it by doing something for me? Will you not, at my begged request, stop bothering me as you do, giving me these hours of misery? I cannot love you. I cannot think of you, and could not possibly ever think of you, as a person to love. I like you, but since you began to assail me with love and these protestations, I have dreaded the

sight of you. Don't you understand what pain it is to me to see you thus, and to see your father and mother in distress about you? It pains me more than I can say. Now will you, for my sake, Ethel, at my beseeching, let it all end, and let us be friends, and go back to your work, and do as your father and mother ask you, and fit yourself for a profession?"

"I should have thought that I had made my position clear to them," Ethelberta said. "Working for a profession would impair my integrity as an artist, which is a thing that I will not do."

"You are not an artist, sir," the Canon said; "and I would that the name had never come into use. You are a trifler in worthless elegances, and we wish you to be of use to the world."

"Your world and mine, sir, are not the same," Ethelberta said. "To me, your world has no existence; and what you call life had better not be. I do not believe in any profession but that of beauty, nor in any life but the service of beauty. I worship Astarte and my moon is there before me, and I need no other light, nor other worship."

"You must not say such pagan things, even in jest, Ethelberta," his mother said.

"There it is," he said gloomily. "You force me to declare my soul's creed and watchword, and all that you can say of it is that it is pagan and a joke."

Jane Harridew came in with tea for everybody. She listened to all that had to be said on both sides.

"Don't you think, Canon," she said, "that it is ill kicking against the pricks? It is useless to thrust against a brick wall when there is no door through it. I used to

dabble in art and literature in a small sort of way, myself, when I was young. If he will let me say so, that makes me a little understand how your son is feeling. Those are the things which he wishes to do. Why should he not go to Paris for a year to study them? They are pure things and lovely, and of good report. I feel sure that if he were doing studies of the sort his present unhappiness would become bearable. Do you think that that is so, Ethel?"

"It might be so," he said. "At any rate, it would provide a plastic function for my emotion."

"That, I should think, is always a good thing," Jane said.

"I have no objection to my son's applying himself to any serious study," the Canon said. "I never have had. I have objected only to a dilettante trifling, which can lead only to folly in this world and to limbo in the next."

"Yes, but art, Poundle," the Canon's wife exclaimed. "Our dear, impressionable boy in Paris, drawing in chalk before young ladies, and often with no clothes on."

"Really, mother," Ethelberta said, "you sometimes talk as though you still wore a crinoline. Perhaps no soul that wears a crinoline ever really takes it off. Between the two of you, you'll drive me to drink."

"Come, my son," the Canon said. "We have no right to inflict all this upon our friends here. If you will apply yourself to art, in Paris or Rome, in whichever place the schools are best, and will let this persecution of Miss Harridew cease, we may still come to be good friends and helpful to each other, instead of as at present, which I am sure you will agree is not an ideal relationship. Now, my boy, will you shake hands with Miss Harridew on

the bargain, that you shall study art and think of her only as a very beautiful friend whom you are not to see for a year?"

"You'll do that, Ethel, won't you?" Carrie said.

"How can I study beauty when I am not to see beauty?" he said. "All art is only a faint shadow of her. You must see that."

"Perhaps my sister will write to you," Jane said, "and try to be helpful in small ways."

"Oh, I know the sort of thing," he said. "The sister's touch; the quarter loaf that is worse than no bread."

"You don't know the sort of thing at all," Carrie said:

"Delightful joys that man attend
Who has a polisht female friend."

"It isn't friendship that I ask," he said. "Even the beggar on the road has friends. What I want is a star in heaven and a divinity within the shrine. Still, modern life seems to consist in annulling the wants of the soul under some plea of society or of state. This is the lily garden where the white fawn dwells, so of course we all come with hoofs to trample it. Come along, Father, and you, Mother; let us go."

"Will you give the promise, my boy?" the Canon said.

"How can I give a promise?" he said. "But you are the authority of all ages which puts Galileo on the rack to make him study the stars according to Ptolemy. Your un-Christian name ought to be Ptolemy, not Poundle, and Mother's ought to be Crinoline."

"I'm sure, my dear boy," his mother said, "that you little know what you are talking of, when you mention crinolines, nor why you should associate me with them; for anything more inconvenient, if not indecent, especially

when getting into a bus. However, my dear boy, the closed carriage is waiting for us. I am too glad to have you at home to want to blame you. Will you say good-bye, and then give me your arm?"

Nothing had been decided, but for the moment Ethelberta was weary. He turned to his father. "May I ask, sir," he said, "how you came to know that I was here, seeing that I took pains to hide my arrival from you?"

"There is no secret in it," the Canon said. "You were seen by Mr. and Mrs. Spanker-Topsell, getting out of the train at Naunton. As they knew how anxious we were at your disappearance from Athens, they telegraphed from the station, and we started hither at once."

"I thought that it could not be inspiration," Ethelberta said, "but for a moment I almost doubted."

After this he consented to be led away, leaving Carrie to transpose other lines of Blake to suit her case:

"I wonder whether the men are mad
And I wonder whether they mean to kill,
And I wonder if Carrie Harridew will die,
For assuredly she is very ill."

She had a perplexed evening and a troubled night, wondering what could be done to help Ethelberta, and fearing what Ethelberta would do whatever was done. She was glad that the creeper which once had climbed about her bedroom windows had now been removed. Even so, she was not at all sure that the crazy boy might not come wooing with a ladder.

The morning brought no outpouring from Ethelberta, as she had feared; notes came from the Canon and his wife, from which she hoped that the boy had become peni-

tent. "Perhaps 'my insanitary Coleridge,'" she quoted, "'may not pay another visit to his Dorothy.'"

At half-past twelve that noon, as she sat at work at her sewing, she heard male feet on the gravel, and was preparing to bolt, when to her relief the visitor stopped and rang the bell. It was not the insanitary Coleridge, who would have boldly entered. She could not hear the man's voice sufficiently well to decide who it was. Teeny brought word that Dr. Frome was there, and would she speak to him a moment?

"Which Dr. Frome is it, Teeny?" she asked.

"Young Dr. Frome, please, miss."

"Very well," she said, with a sinking heart. "Ask him to come in." She herself walked to the door and called, "Come in, Dr. Frome. What can I do for you?"

Young Frome came in, and as he entered, all the jolly look, that he had from youth and nature, went out of his face. She left the door ajar purposely. "Come over to the fire and sit down," she said.

"Thanks," he said. "I'm not cold. I'd rather stand."

"It is very mild, isn't it?" she said.

"Do you mind if I shut the door?" he asked.

"Shall I mind if I let you shut it?" she asked.

"I don't think you've been much troubled by me," he said. "But leave it open."

"No, no; shut it, of course, Richard," she said. "I was horrid to say that."

"No, we'll leave it open," he said.

She moved across the room, shut the door, and returned to her chair, purposely with her back to the light. "What is it that you wanted to say to me, Richard?" she asked.

"Don't you be scared. I'm not going back on my bar-

gain," he said. "You've ruled me out of my hopes; that's at an end. But there are a good many rumours going about. I hear them: Living in the country I know that nine-tenths of them are false, but the tenth part may be partly true."

"What kind of rumour do you mean, Richard?"

"Rumours about your being molested and set upon."

"I have been a little troubled once or twice," she said. "But the disturbance has been quelled by the local police, without the calling out of the militia."

"You're not living in dread of anybody? It hasn't reached that point with you?"

"Oh, dear no, Richard. I understand that my most insistent admirer is not even in the country at present."

"You mean the one in Paris?"

"Yes."

"He's coming back for the point-to-point," Richard said. "He's not wanting in brazenness, as you may have noticed. It was about him that I came to you. If he should come, would you like me and Bunny to keep a guard?"

"It wouldn't be possible," she said. "You couldn't form any guard that wouldn't be broken fifty times in a day. It is very sweet of you to think of it, but it really would never do. I am buying a ferocious terrier and a dog-whip; and for anything more than that I shall be like Dr. Johnson: 'What I cannot do for myself, the Law shall do for me.' The last thing I want is bloodshed on my account."

"It would only be a nose or two," he pleaded.

"Even that simple pleasure must be denied to you," she said. "I was reading a French book the other day about

an English girl: 'Miss Sylvie was one of these English virgins adorable, of step athletic and masculine élan.' I am going to be like Miss Sylvie. It is dear of you to want to guard me; but it would not do, and father would be furious. He exercises some of the milder terrors of the Law, remember, and is jealous of any infringement of his rights."

"I don't seem to have much luck," Richard said. "I don't seem to be able to be of any use to you anyhow, either in peace or war."

"I am grateful for your offers, on either side," she said.

"There it is," Richard said. "I suppose, Carrie, there is no chance, ever, of your changing your mind?"

She shook her head. "None," she said.

"All right. I'm not going to make another scene. If you ever want help of any sort that I can give, please remember that it's all I live for at present."

"There's nobody whose help I'd rather have than yours, Richard," she said. "You always make me feel that it isn't expected to buy anything."

"It isn't," he said. "I wish Miss Sylvie all luck with the dog-whip. Please teach your dog not to bite me by mistake." He went away, as he would have gone from a patient, without shaking hands.

She told her father that Vaughan was coming back for the point-to-point, presumably to ride his horse, Cock-robin.

"Coming back to ride," the old man said. "Coming back here to mix with the hunt? Why, no, Carrie, I hardly think that he will have quite the face for that."

"Dr. Frome spoke of it as certain," she said.

"Certain, did he?" the old man growled. "Upon my

word, the fellow's brow must be brass. I'll take steps that shall ensure him a fit reception. He shall ride no horse in any meeting of which I'm on the committee. Thank God, a gentleman still can control his sports a little, even if everything else has gone to the dogs." So with a growl he drove over to see Sir Peter about it, and returned in good humour (for him) because Sir Peter had asked his advice about putting bitches to Arrogant. "Arrogant was the best puppy I ever walked," he said. "Arrogant and Architect, two of the Creever Arracan lot. Lovely hounds from every point of view. So when he said, 'What do you think of putting bitches to Arrogant?' I said 'He'll sire exactly the kind of hound this country needs.' I was very open with him. I told him my mind. But I'll say this for Sir Peter, he takes criticism well. And he said to me, 'Harridew,' he said, 'I'm glad to hear you speak like this, for I have put bitches to Arrogant'; though, by George, Carrie, I suppose this is hardly the kind of talk for you."

"Oh, go on, Father," she said, "I can stand much worse than this. Sport admits a licence not otherwise permitted to my sex." However, there the matter for the moment rested.

A day or two later, while Carrie was still worrying herself about her lovers, she was visited by Mike Hankerton. She had never much minded Mike, he had "no harm in him," so everybody said, "but simply wasn't any good." He had been in the City, in Canada, on the Stock Exchange, on a horse ranch, and on the stage, among other things.

"Carrie," he said, "I've come to ask a tremendous favour from you."

Her heart sank, for that was what most men came to ask of her.

"What is it, Mike?" she asked.

"We're thinking of getting up some theatricals," he said, "in aid of the parish room. We want to do *The Area Belle*, or *Ici on parle Français*, and we want you to play lead; will you? Do be a brick and say you will."

"I'm very much flattered," she said. "But when are the plays to be?"

"Oh, some time next month."

"I'm afraid it's no good, Mike; that would bring it into Lent, and be out of the question."

"Oh, I say, what rotten bally luck. Surely you don't keep Lent, do you; sackcloth, and fish, and things?"

"I have a parent and a sister, Mike, whose principles I respect."

"I say, what a mildewed idea, what?"

"They observe Lent rigidly, and though I may not share their views in all ways I should not like to flout them."

"Yes, but hang it, Carrie; one little innocent play, in aid of a good cause: and hang it, our parson at Lythitt is the chap responsible. Hang it all, if the parson says the thing is all right, dash it, I don't see how anyone could object."

"Your parson, according to my parent's views, is an unsafe guide."

"Well, hang it, he's in the business, which your father isn't; he ought to know best. Besides, it's for such an awfully good cause—a parish room. But apart from all that, it would go like fireworks if you were on the bills, and be such fun for everybody."

"I'm sorry, Mike; but it cannot be."

"Oh, I say! how abso-bally-lutely rotten."

"Couldn't you put it off till after Easter?"

"It's no fun after Easter," he said, "the evenings are light, and nobody wants to act then; besides, tennis is beginning. No, it'll have to be as planned. But couldn't you, anyhow, come and sing between? That is, sing between the turns?"

"Ah, but Mike, the whiff of the pit is over any entertainment in Lent."

"Even if you sang, 'O that we two were maying,' or that other tripe about not being alone in the dark?"

"I won't have my songs mocked at, Mike," she said. "My songs are me."

"They're not," he said. "Your songs are tripe, but when you sing them they seem the loveliest songs going. Surely you sing to your father during Lent?"

"Yes, if he wishes; that is different. He wouldn't like me to sing in public. I must respect his wishes."

"What perfectly mouldy luck. But would you sing a hymn? No one could object to a hymn."

"I should object to a hymn just before a farce."

"Well, after then."

"In company with a farce," she said, "it would not do."

"Well, could we cut out *Ici on parle Français* or *The Area Belle*? After all, people have seen them pretty often, and they are no great shakes, after the seventh or eighth time; though of course they're brilliant pieces of construction and all that. Why shouldn't we do bits of the Children's Pilgrim's Progress in dumb show: tableaux vivants?"

"Father doesn't approve of the Pilgrim's Progress. He

happens not to approve of Nonconformity nor of Allegory."

"I say, Carrie," Mike said. "I do think you have a right to call your soul your own. I can't bear to think of you shut in like this and thwarted and . . ."

"I'm not shut in, nor thwarted, Mike," she said. "I have a very full, happy life; for a woman in the country a perfect life."

"It isn't the life for you, Carrie," Mike said. "If you would throw in your lot with mine, I could bring you into touch with the real world, where all your nature would expand to the full and you would be the Phœnix you really are."

"Thank you, Mike, I've no wish to be a Phœnix. If I am one, really, I'd much rather keep cool about it."

"You've lived so long under tyranny," he said, "that you really no longer know what your inmost self is crying out for. I'm not much of a chap, of course, and can't offer you much at present, but I know that if I had you as my incentive I should strain every nerve. There's a chap, a fearful swell in London, who knows my uncle. He's promised to try to get me on to a sisal plantation, where it is frightfully good screw, and in a year or two, with you, I might have a plantation of my own. And anyhow in the meantime I could bring you into a real world. This place is all very well, but it is eighteenth century, whereas with me you would at least breathe your own time and have the homage which is your due; as well as intellectual companionship, and freedom to do plays in Lent."

"Thank you, Mike; it's very sweet of you, but I'd rather stay as I am."

"I expected you'd say that," Mike said. "I expected that at first the prospect of liberty would rather daunt you."

"It doesn't daunt me, Mike," she said, "but it doesn't tempt me. I will not 'throw in my lot with you' as you ask me, even for the privilege of doing a play in Lent. I think you're quite a nice boy, who has not yet found what he can really work at, nor what he wants to do in life. You mustn't complicate that tangle any further, Mike, by thinking of a wife at present. The man must work and the woman must weep, for the present. But anyhow, I'm not the woman; that is very clear to me."

"You're the only woman who has even given me womanly sympathy," he said.

"I haven't even given you that, Mike," she said. "I've liked having you here, and I happen still to have a look of youth about me. But please, Mike, don't go on; it will only be a pain, besides being quite, quite impossible. Tell me about your sisal plantation. I thought sisal was a kind of glue."

"No, it's a kind of string," he said, "that goes into reapers and binders."

"And you are going to grow the string. Does it grow in strings? It must be an obliging plant."

"No, I don't believe it grows in strings. I don't know much about the bally stuff; it may, for all I know. But anyhow it grows, and then it becomes string. And there was a chap I knew in Alberta who got run over by a reaper-and-binder, and he got reaped more or less, and then bound by it. It's rather thick string, so this chap said: all vegetable fibre."

"Whereabouts in the world does it grow?"

"Oh, it needs heat," Mike said. "So if I get the job, it will probably be just messing around in a white suit bossing the natives. It's a tropical job; you have to do it mostly on a pony. You get a frightfully good screw, because of the climate. However, such lots of chaps are eager to get into the sun at any price that I'm afraid I shan't have much chance."

At this point, Teeny came to say that Mr. Ethelberta had come from Tatchester. Ethelberta came in with a look which became markedly more gloomy when he saw Mike. He did not like Mike, who disliked him. Ethelberta had been changed in the few days at Tatchester. His hair had been cut to the length usual among men, his soft collar had been replaced by a starched one, his terra cotta tie had been changed for a stiff piece of black silk.

"Ah, Ethel," Carrie said; "come and sit down and smoke. Are you taking any part, Ethel, in Mike's entertainment at Lythitt?"

"Where is Lythitt?" he asked.

"Compton Lythitt, where the Hankertons live."

"Oh, that place," Ethelberta said; "I should have thought its name was entertainment enough."

"They're getting up an entertainment in aid of the parish room," Carrie said. "However, it won't be just yet. The point-to-point is the immediate delight. I suppose you will both be over for that, won't you?"

"I shall come over," Mike said, "unless I have to go to town about this appointment. I believe they have a frightfully stiff medical exam. They make a chap go into a hot-house and turn on the steam and notice what colour his blood turns, or something."

Ethelberta looked at Mike, then looked away.

"Will you be at the point-to-point, Ethel?" Carrie asked.

"You mean the contest with horses?" he said.

"No, I mean the races, the hunt steeplechases," she said.

"Oh, where they beat horses to prove that one can go faster than another, or to find out what colour their blood turns, or something? No. I cannot say that a spectacle of the sort is likely to attract me. Did you really think that it would?"

"Why, yes," she said, "you used to enjoy them, Ethel. I remember you saying that the only means by which an intelligence could retain sanity was by an occasional plunge into brutality. You said 'the sick mind, like the sick beauty, needs her blood bath.' "

"I don't think you need wash my last year's dirty linen in public," he said.

"There are some jolly fine gees entered this year, what!" Mike said.

"What what?" Ethelberta asked.

"What is 'what what'?" Mike asked.

"I thought you asked a question," Ethelberta said.

"No, I only said what?" Mike said.

"It may have been that which misled me," Ethelberta said. "In fact, now I come to think of it, it must have been."

"Let's come on out," Carrie said, "and play bowls on the new tennis-courts. Mike, you run out and roll the court over once or twice, and you, Ethel, get the bowls from under the hall table, will you? while I get my hat."

She thought that her swains would fly at her bidding; however, neither meant to leave the other to a chance of a talk alone with her. When she returned with her hat, both youths were fidgetting about in the room, trying to ignore each other's presence.

"What, not gone yet?" she said. "Come on, now; this is not at all the way to play bowls with sweet Poll Pineapple. But perhaps you'd rather not play bowls?"

"I'd love to," Mike said.

"I'll play, to make a game," Ethelberta said.

"All right, then," she said. "There is the bowl-box, under the hall table there. Perhaps you'd each take a handle; it's a bit heavy for one."

"I can manage it alone all right," Mike said.

"Weren't you going to roll?" Ethelberta asked.

"I was asked to take a handle."

"There's really no need," Ethelberta said. "I'll bring the bowls along, if you'll roll."

"Now that I'm here, I may as well bear a hand," Mike said.

As he knelt to pull out the box Ethelberta said to Carrie:

"We'll go out to roll, then, shall we, while he brings the things?"

"No, no," Carrie said. "It's a heavy box. Help him, Ethel."

"I don't want any help, thanks," Mike said. "I've got him now. I can manage it all right." He dragged out the box and tossed it on to his shoulder.

Old Mr. Harridew came into the hall at that moment. "I must interrupt all thought of any game for the moment," he said. "Will you please come into my study,

Carrie? I have various things to say." Then, turning to the young men, he added:

"Perhaps you will be so kind as to arrange presently with my daughter to come some other morning. We must wish you good morning now."

When he had opened the door to them and shown them out, he led Carrie into his study.

"I have been thinking over a note I've had from Sir Peter," he said. "That fellow who was here, the creature Vaughan, was warned off the point-to-point. However, he says that he is coming to dispute the ruling. Now we can easily deal with him, but we have to consider the question of yourself. Do you not think that you might be easier in your mind if you were to go to your friends in London for a fortnight, and give up the point-to-point?"

"Yes, I should, Father," she said. "I would like to go up to Muriel's for a couple of weeks. These Strephons are being too much for this Phyllis: I should be thankful for the rest."

"Very well, then, my dear," the old man said. "That is settled then. You'll want frocks and things, however, going to London. You may draw on me for thirty pounds."

CHAPTER XIV

GEORGE CHILDREY called at the Manor that afternoon, to see her. "I've come to talk to you about the point-to-point," he said.

"You know, George," she said, "I shan't be at the point-to-point, after all. I'm going up to London for a couple of weeks."

"Oh, I say, what wretched luck," he said. "Whatever has happened to make you change your plans?"

"Three or four things together," she said, "none of them important; but with accumulative effect."

"Oh, Lord," George said. "I did want you to be at the meeting."

"I shall think of you at the meeting, and hope you'll win. How's Kilkenney?"

"He's very fit, thanks. But I wanted you to be there to see him. And I came up to-day to beg a little bit of your favourite colour."

"I'll get you a piece of colour," she said. She returned with a piece of blue ribbon which smelt of lavender. "Here is a piece of the colour," she said. "Will you put it on Kilkenney's headband?"

"Thank you," he said. "It jolly well won't go on any headband, but right against the rider's heart. And if that won't carry him first past the post I don't know what will. But I say, Carrie, it won't be any fun with you not there."

"It will be; great fun," she said. "And I shall expect to hear all about it at the ball."

"That's a hideous long time away," he said.

"It's only two weeks."

"Yes, two weeks to you," he said, "looking at lovely things in the shops and going to theatres. It'll be jolly nearly two years to me."

"It will pass like the light to me, George," she said. "For I've come into a heavenly windfall. Father's given me thirty pounds. What do you think I ought to do with it?"

"Spend it on a bust," he said, "one glorious bust that will be a memory forever."

"I'm thinking of a little bust," she said, "that will be a memory for some time; and the rest I shall keep in the bank, against my next great temptation."

"I suppose the bust will be a dress for the ball?" he said.

"Yes, George. However did you guess? 'My thought is indeed a horse of that colour.'"

"And you go to London to-morrow?"

"Yes, and back the night before the ball."

"And how many dances will you give me?" he asked.

"No, George," she said; "much must depend on whether you win at the races."

"In that case I'll win," he said. As Lou came in with Sandy then, their talk ended.

CHAPTER XV

THEY had fine but somewhat cloudy westerly weather for the races, with enough wind to blow out the flags on the jumps and tents, and enough sun to make the scene delightful. The tents, enclosures and carriage-stands were on a low slope called The Runners (possibly from a now vanished inn) above the flattish fields of Yell Brook, which made the "four miles of fair hunting country" of the course. Near the enclosures there were booths, selling nut-toffee, Italian cream in pink and white slabs, and brandy-balls. The turf between the booths was often stuck about with paper zinnias and dahlias on sticks. There were also amusement-booths, a try-your-strength-machine, at which you smote a disc with a mallet; a try-your-skill-machine, at which you prodded a loop of leather with a dart; and a try-your-luck-machine, which dealt you a hand of cards from which you did not profit. There was a small hurdled ring, where men in loud check suits, often hung about with bright tin medals, called to the world to come and do business with your old friends, who paid first past the post, and whose mottoes were reliability, courtesy, and prompt payment. Someone at a rifle booth kept crying, "Step up, step up and shoot the glittering globes." The spitting cracks of the little caps were almost continuous. Men passed by, crying "Cards of the races." The hunt terrier-man in faded scarlet, which

he had worn as huntsman on the great Pyeford Bridge Day, thirty years before, was offering his poem on that event at sixpence a copy. The lines of the carriages kept lengthening out; all sorts were there, from the four-in-hand to the farm-cart, in line after line, some with shafts up, some with shafts down, the horses secured in the intervals, with rugs over their backs and their heads tossing at the nose-bags.

All the countryside was there: the middle period folk as actors, the old and the young as spectators. The old men were there in great numbers, leaning on their Sunday sticks. Nearly all wore knee-breeches and gaiters. Their coats reached far down and were very baggy over the hips, with inner pockets on each side big enough to hold three rabbits. They wore old tall hats that had belonged to the grandfathers of the present Squires, and each of them could have told a history of that countryside such as does not come into history-books. They could do a bit of work still at foalings and calvings, pig-killings, mole-catchings, and rick-thatchings. Some of them sang (and danced) the old songs, pointing the stresses with their pipe-stems: and knew odd versions of the Mummer's Play, which ended with the killing of a beast. All remembered the good old days of public hangings, whippings, duckings, stockings, and gibbetings; when bastards (so it was thought) could be drowned and wives sold; when few could read or write (indeed, most of them could only make their mark); when men were hanged or transported for being present when someone set fire to a rick; and mowing was done with a scythe and threshing with a flail. George Childrey, moving about the course before the races began, stopped to talk to many of these old

men, whom he now saw for the first time for seven years.

"Nice day for your ride, Master George," they said. "And I'm sure I hope you'll win. 'Tis nice mucky falling down by they jumps. 'Tidn't like it had been frosty; they'd a broke their bones then."

"I'll very likely break mine," George said.

"It's only the English, they say," the old man said, "that go breaking their bones for pleasure. But you won't break any bones, Master George. That Kilkenny's a rare horse, sir, and looking purely."

A bell rang for saddling for the first race. All the noise of the meeting increased suddenly; champagne bottles popped; the bookies' cries rose up, "I back the field a pony," and "Two to one, bar one. Two to one, bar one." Horses squealed, whinnied and bickered; the hawkers cried their wares. The festival smell of trodden grass and many people and horses came strong upon the nostrils. Snatches of talk were heard: "What, you say your hands are cold, Alf?" a mother said to her little boy. "Well, put them in your pockets; it'll help to keep your trousers up."

"He isn't much of a rider," a man was saying; "you can tell that by the way he rides."

"What, Mother," someone cried; "so you've come to see 'em break their necks?"

"That's it," Mother said: "their own, or their horses' necks; it don't seem to matter which, do it, to most of 'em."

There came a movement among the crowd as the hunt servants, who were to keep the course, moved down to

their places. After them came seven farmers, on horses of greatly varying quality, for the first race. George watched them draw into line, pause, and spring into motion at the start. He noticed one very powerful horse on the near side of the field, eating up the going like a glutton, and promptly backed him in his heart to win. He saw them go over the first fence and pass away into the country, where his pick lost twenty lengths at the turn. He then walked over to the water-jump, from which it was but a hundred yards to the straight. In a few minutes the riders came into sight, only three of them left, Old J. leading on a failing horse, the strong horse well up, and the third fifty yards behind. Old J.'s horse was done, but Old J. put him at the leap. He went at it, swerved into it, seemed to turn over sideways, and sent Old J. into the water. This made the second horse refuse. As the rider brought him round with an oath and a blow for a second attempt, the third man got safely across and won as he pleased.

"A rotten bit of luck," a man said. "Young Kissop had the race won but for that brute balking him, and there goes my sov."

"That's what'll happen to me in about half an hour's time," George thought. All the same, he had Carrie's ribbon against his heart, and the memory of those words of hers, "Much must depend on whether you win at the races." What had those words meant? Much must depend on it; how much? His heart beat and beat, and the blood now and then seemed to fill his eyes in that "seeing red" of deep excitement. "I must win," he thought. "I will win."

As he drew near to the enclosure he heard a quarrel proceeding on the other side of the screen. On entering in, he found old Bill Ridden hard at it with Vaughan, who was dressed for riding as though he meant to race. Cockrobin was in the enclosure, but not stripped. Old Bill had lived much in the wilds; he was a fairly rough customer.

"If you were a blacksmith," old Bill was saying, "I'd recommend you to a tribe of Indians, where you'd be the father of your people, perhaps; but as you're not a blacksmith, only a blackguard, I can't do that. But if you think, being a blackguard, that you can race here, I'll show you your mistake."

"I like fighting heavy-weights," Vaughan said; "they fall so heavy."

"I've known pride fall," old Bill said, "like you fell from the Manor windows."

Men laughed at this, and one man, busy at the girth of a horse, called out: "He didn't fall; the housemaid pitched him."

"I gather there was pitch about," Bill growled. "I guess the poor girl mucked her fingers."

Cannonbone, looking colder and more forbidding than ever, said, "Come along out, Vaughan; you can deal with these half-sirs later." Old J., riding in, dripping from his race, on an exhausted horse, heard this, and called out, "I'm damned if they'll deal with you; except at cash with order."

Bunny Manor, who was busy about his horse, called out a greeting to George. Sir Peter, walking up at that moment, asked Vaughan to go, and to take Cockrobin out of the enclosure. Vaughan did not answer, but did

as he was bid; he was seen a minute later drinking champagne at his turn-out.

Presently all was ready: George mounted and rode out of the enclosure with the seven other riders. As he went slowly down to the post he met Lou Harridew with Sandy, who were waiting for him.

"Go in and win, young man," Lou said. "Get to it and strangle them. There's nothing in it but yours: look at them and know them:

'Two from the milk-cart, one from the hearse,
And then three blind ones and a bolter.' "

"That's all you know about it," George said.

"Good luck to you," the pleasant Sandy said, in his rather slow, distinct, Scotch speech.

"Thanks," George said. "Have you any news of Carrie, Lou?"

"Carrie is in London, George," she said, "adding to her armoury from parental munificence."

"She'll be back for the ball?" he asked.

"She has only gone to prepare for it," Lou said. "Good luck! I've got my blouse on you, and Sandy a more manly garment."

He was cheered by this, and cantered away from them to the start. He liked the look of Bunny's horse; a big Irish hunter called Muckish: there was a man called Dick on a chestnut; and young Cothill on the beautiful black whose beauty was all forward. There was a young fellow on a little wild horse with very straight shoulders, which looked as though it would not go far. Next to him was the man called "Pretty Pipsqueak" on a bay; one of the Tencombe men was there on a light chestnut chaser, beautiful to look at; the other man was Len Stokes on an ugly,

big, powerful horse called The Bruiser. George fancied Muckish of the seven, but thought that Kilkenny would beat him. There was little to choose between four of the eight horses there. Sir Peter, who was starter, was delayed for a minute or two while the little brown wild horse careered and plunged. George, as he waited, saw the huntsman take position beside the first jump. Beyond that jump he saw Vaughan, careering on Cockrobin.

"What the devil's Vaughan up to?" he asked.

Lou and Sandy walked towards the water-jump, which was the second and the last jump on the course. When they had nearly reached the guard-rails, Vaughan, much flushed with wine, rode up to them.

"Hallo, my lil' Loo and Sandy," he cried. "Y'know I wanter shplain about the bedroom. Dev'lish odd thing, y'know, I gorr in wrong bedroom. Odd mistake. I'm always doing it. I'm that sort of fella." A little boy at this instant suddenly slapped Cockrobin's loin, so that Cockrobin swerved away on to the course, with Vaughan swaying this way and that, almost off. It was this that George saw.

The huntsman watching the start did not see Vaughan till Sir Peter's handkerchief was down, and the eight were straining towards him. "Come, clear the course, sir; clear the course," he cried. "Mr. Vaughan, sir, look out; they're off." He had not time to get to him to head him off the course, for almost at that instant the eight were at the fence and over it in a bunch together, The Bruiser a little ahead. George saw Cockrobin swing round: in the next instant Vaughan was in the race, crying out, "Come on, boys; who says I'm not to ride?"

The riders cursed him, but he only cheered and led

them at the water-jump. Lou and Sandy heard him shouting ribaldry in his merry musical tenor. The race went over and away; but the wild little brown horse refused. They all went streaming away into the country, and tailing out as they streamed.

"Dick's out of it," Lou said, as she watched through her glasses. "There goes his chestnut."

"What happened?" Sandy asked. "I fear I was watching the wee wild horse here."

"Dick took a toss on the other side of the fence," Lou said. "He's none the worse."

"There they go," Sandy said. "I do not think Mr. Childrey stands much chance; he's lying far behind at present. Yon big horse of Mr. Stokes' is leading, and that drunken madcap just on his quarters."

"We'll walk a little towards them," Lou said; "then we shall see them again."

They walked some fifty yards from the jump to a rise from which they could see the distant course, with the little blue and white pennons blowing above the jumps. "There they come, down the slope," Sandy said; "Mr. Stokes and the drunkard leading; then Mr. Childrey; then a gap; then three together. Ah, look at that! One of the leaders is down; it's the drunkard, I think; no, it's Mr. Stokes. Yes, Stokes is down. Yes, it's Stokes; there goes his horse. Now look at them: they've all got their horses by the head, and are closing on the leaders; but the drunkard is still well ahead."

"Let's get back and across to the straight now," Lou said.

They went to the paling beside the water-jump, climbed up it, and watched from that point.

"The drunken fellow is in front still," Sandy said. "Watch him as he comes into sight."

They bent their glasses upon the jump; they saw Vaughan come over, "hailing a bus." What happened they did not know; they saw Cockrobin come down, roll completely over, stumble and get up. Vaughan seemed to turn a complete somersault and did not get up. Muckish came over on the right, Kilkenny followed three lengths behind; close upon George were the Tencombe man and Cothill.

"Come along, quick, to the straight," Lou cried. They ran together to the white rails, where the crowd was massed with bent shoulders and craning heads.

Far away to their right, over the fence of the water-jump, they saw the wavering heads of riders swaying nearer.

At the water-jump Will Hill and old Punch climbed up the guard-rails and shouted, "Now, Master George. Come along, Master George. Stick to 'en, Master George. Lay into 'en, Master George, oh, do 'ee now."

They saw Bunny Manor glance round and go over the water a length ahead. Kilkenny seemed to land beside him, Cothill landed, the Tencombe man landed. Cothill's black whinnied at the sight of the straight. Cothill gave him a slash that sent him up to Muckish. Then instantly all four were finishing. Cothill was up to Muckish, with all the straight roaring and yelling. Then George was up, and the Tencombe man was up, the four were all together, soul and muscle at one, women were crying, men cheering: "Come on now, Mr. Manor. Tencombe, Tencombe. Now, Master George."

The black led, Tencombe led, Kilkenny led, Muckish

led again. Then Kilkenny's effort seemed to grow greater, as though he were suddenly become a greater horse; instantly there came a final, swift, fatal sorting out of values. George was past the white post a neck ahead, the black second, Muckish third; and all four horses went careering on for fifty yards before they could come to a canter or pull up.

"I suppose it was Mr. Cothill's race," Lou said.

"No, no," Sandy said; "Mr. Childrey just did it, as I thought he would. There go the numbers."

The Whip trotted past them, bearing the official numbers from the judge.

"Was it Mr. Childrey's race, Dansey?" Lou asked him.

"Yes, miss; by a neck."

"It's better to be born lucky than rich," Lou said. "That young man will next be taking a wife."

"Do you think he'll be taking Carrie?" her lover asked. "It is plain enough what he feels about her."

"George Childrey is a very wild young man," Lou said. "I don't mean in a self-indulgent way, but in the volcanic way. He is liable to erupt when the fancy takes him."

"He's quiet enough at the present time," Sandy said. "Yon is a nice wee property, yon Bartons."

"No, no," Lou said. "That young man has lava gathering; when the lake is full it will overflow."

"If she doesn't take Childrey," Sandy said, "I should think young Cothill would be the likeliest."

"My sister Carrie is an attractive young female woman," Lou said, "who will not want for adorers for many years to come. I don't think that she has yet seen anyone of whom she could think even once as a partner in life."

"What sort of man, do you think, will she choose in the end?" Sandy asked.

"A sort of Assyrian king who shoots lions with a bow and arrow; a stubby-bearded black man who can bend a poker on his wrist: that's the sort she really likes. There are not any in the district, but romantic dreams are free."

There came the movement of a crowd towards them. In the midst of it, two policemen, helped by four other men, were carrying the body of Vaughan upon a hurdle. He was not dead, a man told Sandy, but not conscious. The members of the crowd as they passed commented on the accident.

"It will be given no race. He had no business in the race; he was drunk, and just joined in."

"He just let his horse down and pitched himself over; he had drunk the good half of a magnum not ten minutes before. He was cooing like a cuckoo as he went at the jump."

"It will be many days before he jumps again, or does any of his frolics. Look at the way his leg waggled. It's a marvel to me young Manor didn't jump right on top of him," etc. So, with outliers of little boys hurrying, and sightseers trying to get nearer to the body, the crowd went on up the slope to the enclosure, where there might be a doctor, or someone who could fetch one.

Meanwhile, George was seeing to Kilkenny, and receiving congratulations, while his heart beat against Carrie's ribbon. He kept thinking of her words, "Much must depend on whether you win at the races." He had won at the races, even if they called it no race, so that the much was earned. In a week there would be the ball, when the much might be claimed.

When he reached home that afternoon he found a telegram for him. He opened it and read:

Best wishes for Kilkenny and rider Race Three.

CARRIE.

It had been handed in at half-past two at a telegraph-office in St. James's, too late to reach him before the race, of course, but in time to show him that she had been thinking of him. That was enough for him. He passed the rest of the day in a kind of mist of bliss, thinking of instants of the race, especially of the final instants, when all that he was, and all that Kilkenny was, had merged into all that the moment was, and all had been for Carrie, whom he would not see for a week. Still, the week would somehow pass, and then, so much might be claimed.

CHAPTER XVI

THE hunt ball was held in the Tatchester Assembly Rooms, now an annexe of the County Inn, though formerly they had had a life of their own. The stage at the end of the ballroom had known the actors of the late eighteenth century, including Mrs. Siddons as Monimia. It had an air of a spacious old time about it. It was a raked, deep stage, with side boxes upon it, decorated with gilded masks and cherubs, and a green-room behind it. All its old dramatic glory was now gone; at the most, a company of amateurs would act a farce there once in two years. Still a kind of spirit hung about it, as happens in all places in which the soul of man has been quickened.

The floor of the ballroom was famous. It was said to have been made of wood from the gun-deck of a French man-of-war captured in the year the room was built. It was of a hard, splinterless, close-grained, dust-coloured wood, which was called African oak, for want of a better name. When this was wet and slippery, the boots at the inn would slide upon it barefooted, at sixpence a time, to show that it would not and could not splinter. When polished and sprinkled with French chalk it made a dancing floor as slippery as hard black ice.

The room, and all its subsidiary rooms, set apart for supper or cards, or cloaks, were lit, as they had been one hundred years before, by candles in the original Georgian sconces and chandeliers, some of them with dangles of cut

glass. The candles dripped a good deal upon the heads and shoulders of the unwary. The walls were painted a dull crimson. The ceiling had been painted by Smee, with an allegorical subject, now somewhat smudged by candle smoke, but said to represent either British Protestantism rebuking Intolerance, or Constitution rebuking Revolution. Anyhow, it handsomely set off the plasterwork, representing pineapples, from which the chandeliers were hung. The walls were bare, save for big mirrors in gilded frames; and one big picture of the Tat-chester Hunt's famous hound Rattler, proper, gardant, passant, above the couplet:

And how can Britain's manly Virtues fail
While Rattler's jocund Offspring scour the Vale?

The room was looking its best, in the glitter of many dozens of candles, when George entered it on the evening of the dance. The Yeomanry Band, in their uniform of dark green with silver frogs, were tuning up upon the stage. The conductor, a little farmer from Tencombe, who bred sheep, played the organ, and was famous for his love of music, was fidgetting with the white gloves which he both wished to wear and to do without. As George passed, with a word of greeting, the little man made up his mind, and put the gloves aside with the remark that "They'll do for the missus, for when she goes calling."

People came flooding in, with laughter and chatter, the women with their eyes shining like stars and the men all rosy and jolly. George looked about for Carrie, who was not there. He met the Captain and Mrs. Kuyper somewhere near the stage and stopped to talk to them.

"What happened to Mr. Vaughan the other day?" they asked.

"Oh, he rode into the race, shouting and drunk," George said. "No one could have stopped him, when once he was in. He was very drunk; the wonder was that he was not down long before. I saw young Frome this morning; he says his thigh's broken, one rib and a collar-bone broken, and a certain amount of concussion. Enough to keep him quiet for a bit."

George asked for dances with Mrs. Kuyper, chatted for a while and passed on, with his eyes open for the Harri-dew party, who had not yet arrived. A hand was laid upon his shoulder. Turning about, he saw his brother Nick, in a very shiny state of hair-oil and white gardenia, with a general look of new coffin in a smart funeral. "I'm stopping in the inn here," Nick said. "I thought that I would run down for the hop, and then back by the morning train."

"You might have come home," George said.

"No, no," Nick said. "I've a prejudice against a ten-mile drive to catch the express the morning after a dance. And they do one very well in the inn here; they know me. But I see Lord and Lady Podgers; I must go to pay my respects."

George saw Lord and Lady Podgers, the Lord tubby and trying to understand what it was all about, and not quite sure that it wasn't the House of Lords; the Lady plainly regretting the savoury of which her dinner had been shorn. Nick had but nodded to the Podgerses on his way to the ante-room, where a big fire blazed. He was now in the ante-room talking to Carrie and her sisters, who were there as flowers to the moths, or as lights to

night-birds. George saw him laughing in his asinine way and Carrie laughing back at him.

"Golly," he thought. "If I don't hurry I shan't get a dance with her at all."

It was not easy to reach her through the crowd; people were flooding into the room and the tide was against him, and the tide bore many people to whom he had to speak. Then at the door, Lou met him; he had to ask Lou to dance.

"I shall be delighted to dance with the laird of Bartons," she said. "Do let us both be thoroughly indiscreet."

"Nothing will please me more," he said. "We will heave discretion to the winds."

"Oh, George," she sighed, "that will be too delicious. But don't you think my blue and silver's ravishing?"

"It is, indeed," he said, wishing her at the devil, for all this while the candle of Carrie's beauty was drawing moths. "You look like my favourite flower."

"And what is that?" she asked.

"Love-in-a-mist," he said.

"And am I really like that to you, George?" she asked. "Do tell me more. And to think that it's too late; or shall we poison Sandy?"

"He's just behind you," George said, greeting Sandy as he spoke. Sandy and Lou passed on into the room. George made another effort to reach Carrie. He had almost reached the door when his way was barred by a lady entering with her daughter. His heart sank, for he knew the lady of old as "Letitia" or "Lady Jar" (because she jarred upon people). There she was, as of old, in an assortment of costly clothes in which she looked like a rag-bag. With her was her eldest daughter Jemima, now

about eighteen, who had plainly been brought there by force. In the past, Letitia would not have spoken to George, thinking him "a wild young man, my dear, and very likely given to all sorts of things." But now George was an eligible bachelor, upon whom she fell as the hawk falls upon the sparrow.

"Oh, Mr. Childrey," she said, "how very nice to meet you here. I always say that a dance always depends on the first person you meet. Now Jemima, darling, hand over your programme to Mr. Childrey, for I'm sure he will want to dance with you, and you can spare him three. You see, Mr. Childrey, this is my little girlie's first dance; it is such an occasion for her. My little puss is getting to be a grown-up girlie; soon she'll be spreading her wings and flying away, and I do think that a dance is such a wing-spreader, if you know what I mean, for making them try their flight."

George shook the damp hand of Jemima, who was hating her mother and himself. He remembered a very different Jemima, with whom he had played in a rowdy game at her home but a few weeks before. "Right, Jemima," he said; "if you'll give me the dances it will be splendid." Seeing her look of nervous, hopeless misery, he added, "We need not dance them all; there'll be a conjuror in one of the rooms." The pallid Jemima, who was beyond speech, blessed him with a look, and was then whirled away to other young men. In between the young men she was given advice in little, swift, low-voiced doses.

"You must try to be arch, Jemima darling. There is nothing that takes so well. Always say to yourself, 'What is the masterpiece of architecture? The arch.' Men like

it so. And never be intellectual. There are plenty of things to talk of, without that. And don't talk booky, darling; or people will take you for a governess." Jemima cast glances of despair after the young St. George who had promised her the conjuror.

But now the conductor had tapped, paused and spread his baton. The music blared, crashed and then floated into rhythm.

An elderly man in pince-nez slid out from the wall with a girl and forgot his pince-nez and his age; others followed, till there were half a dozen, then a dozen. George, as he set off with a girl to whom Polly Colway had introduced him, saw Carrie floating by with young Frôme, in a very heaven of the delight of the dance. They were noticed by all, for they were the best dancers there, and by much the most beautiful couple. George's partner, who was a somewhat wooden waltzer and otherwise immature, murmured, "Oh, isn't Miss Harri-dew lovely?"

"She is indeed," George said, "most lovely, and a very good dancer."

"I call it awfully hard luck," the girl said, "that one face should have everything. All Miss Harridew's face is good. The hair is perfectly lovely; the skin is the best in the county; the eyes—oh, to have violet eyes! It's always been the dream of my life, and then to have those perfect lashes and brows. Then the mouth and teeth. My sister and I were debating the other day which one would choose when one was looking at her—to have her mouth open or shut."

"Which did you choose?" George asked.

"We could not agree. I like her mouth a little open,

to show the teeth. But Ruthy liked the mouth best in repose. Which do you like?"

"The teeth are awfully good," George said.

"And they're all her own," the girl said. "I was having my teeth done in Tatchester, at Dr. Gubbinses, and the young man said that Miss Harridew's teeth were the best he had ever seen. She went to him when she was cutting a wisdom tooth; he said that he had never seen such teeth, 'as strong as dominoes and white as ivory, and as regular as a Roman road.' But even when the teeth aren't showing the mouth is very beautiful. And a mouth so seldom is anything, is it? except a sort of slit like a post-office. Don't they say that Mr. Gladstone eats his food as though he were posting letters? Or was that the other man? I'm afraid I'm frightfully ignorant of politics and everything else."

They paused at the wall for a moment while the dance turned about them with gracious rhythm and the faint noise of shifting feet and flying flounces. The room was now full of dancers, though there were not too many for comfort. There was the affected ass, that everybody called The Puppy, dancing with Polly Colway to show how it ought to be done, reversing with faultless skill through a mist of dancers going the other way. The joy of the dance was now strong upon all the company and eyes were bright. The little conductor's face was turned up, with a smile, his eyes nearly closed. The mothers and chaperones of the girls dancing glanced at the dear girls enjoying themselves and critically observed the manners of their partners. George and Violet (he didn't know her other name) watched Carrie sailing by with young Frome. "Oh, I *do* admire her," Violet said.

"She is easily the belle of the ball. They say that she's the loveliest woman in the county. There was a painter here in the summer, from London, who wanted to paint her as Queen Gwenivere, but of course Mr. Harri dew couldn't permit *that*. Queen Gwenivere, indeed. If it had been an angel I could have understood it. Men are simply off their heads about her."

"I know one young lady who is fairly enthusiastic," George said.

"I don't care," Violet said, with the generosity of youth; "I'm not going not to praise her. Beauty is the best thing a woman can have; everybody knows that. If you haven't got it yourself, to praise it in another is next best. If you can't have it, at least you can see it, and say so. Oh, I wonder Dr. Frome doesn't go stark staring mad."

"Perhaps he will soon," George said, who was not happy at the sight of Frome. "What shall we do if he bites her?"

"Kill him stark staring dead," Violet said. "And a good riddance to bad rubbish."

"Come along now," George said, as the dance ended. "We'll explore the sitting-out places. Or do you already know them all here?"

"I never was at such a big dance before," Violet said. "And I've never been in this place at all."

"There's a haunted room in the far wing," George said, "where an old man was murdered for his gold. I don't know it, either. We'll explore."

It was a pleasant place to explore. The wing of the inn, which was open to the dancers, was part of a Jacobean mansion, with old oak stairs, broad, and in short

flights of six, with carved banisters and many nooks, half-landings and recesses. The stairs were carpeted with thick red Axminster plain cloths. The walls were hung with sporting prints and pictures of gentlemen in top hats and scarlet coats, jumping brown, dock-tailed hunters over five-barred gates in grass hunting counties. As they went up the stairs, they saw, away to their left, in a very snug and dim recess, on a little half-landing lit by a lamp with a blue glass, the two faces of Frome and Carrie turned towards them, smiling. They waved and passed on. They saw light at a half-open door; pushing it open they looked into a room where a conjuror was preparing for his performance later in the evening. Two bent figures of comedians, who were dressing, rose as the door opened. One of them said, "'Ere, if you don't mind, this is where we got to dress in." George apologized and led Violet away. "There's an entertainment here," he said, "for those who aren't dancing."

They peeped into one of the card-rooms. Two men in scarlet stood with their backs to the fire, each smoking a cigar. One was saying, "Y'know, it's a deuced funny thing: I can't stand curaçao. I can stand any other drink y'like to name, but not curaçao."

"Deuced funny, that," the other said. "For you remind me of a chap I used to know in Mombasa. A very sound sort of chap: I never can remember names, but *he* couldn't stand curaçao."

More followed, but the two went on to the foot of another stair, which seemed dim with all romance and untrodden yet by any of the dancers. Violet seemed to shrink from venturing so far; but had no chance of either going or refusing, because the band below struck up some

warning bars to call folk for the next dance. "There's the second dance," George said, "I must take you back to your partner."

He gave her into the hands of a youth with oiled hair; then, as he was not dancing this dance, and Carrie was dancing with Nick, he went again into the inn to look for a good sitting-out place. He found another stair carpeted red and banistered with black oak. A fire glowed near the stair foot: a big clock ticked beside it. The stair led to a deserted corridor carpeted red, like the rest of the house, and hung at the windows with heavy crimson curtains, looped with tasselled cords of crimson and gold. Near the head of the stair was a small Empire settle upholstered in red. Below the windows on the walls were two paintings of some seventy years before, one of Mr. Tailby's brown horse Hougomont, the other of Mr. ——d's (the name was obliterated) famous black horse, El Moro. All that part of the inn seemed deserted. There were two big locked doors. At the end of the corridor there was another corridor in which there were two more locked doors: all was dimly lit, rich and silent, with no one about.

Coming back to the stairhead, he heard the music of the band far off, as though in another world. The clock ticked, the coal in the fire settled: all that part of the inn was asleep and remote, as though it had no share in the evening. He stood there thinking of Carrie till the band quickened time for a last few bars and brought the dance to a close. The buzz of voices became suddenly louder, though no one came pushing through the doors into his solitude.

He danced the fifth dance, a waltz, with Carrie. If

anything had been needed to make him utterly her slave this would have done it. She was the best dancer he had ever danced with, light and quick to steer. His joy at dancing with her was tempered by the fear of letting her down; for he was not a good dancer, nor in practice. "If I let you down, Carrie," he said, "I suppose you'll never forgive me."

"Diplomatic relations will be strained, George, but not broken off, unless I think that it is after supper."

"I'll never forgive myself if I let you down. You are a lovely dancer, light as a feather. Everyone's saying that you're the best dancer here."

"That's very kind of them. Who's everyone?"

"Look at their faces," George said. "You can see that they're all looking at you, and thinking you're the belle."

"Oh, George, if they're all looking at me, my hair must be coming down. Is it?"

"No fear; it's jolly well done."

"It is rather nicely done," she said. "And how do you like my dress?"

"It's the loveliest dress in the room, easily," he said; "and it suits you to perfection."

"George," she said, "I'm dancing Number 10 with you. As I told you, Nick is taking me to supper. Will you be awfully nice and take Janey to supper?"

"Yes. I've arranged to."

"Oh, thank you. That is sweet of you. I might have known that you would have. Poor old Janey isn't very popular, but she's the only one of us able to keep things going. She brings us here, and often doesn't have a very good time. She puts up spikes all round, because something once got in and hurt her. And I know she likes

you, because you don't like somebody else, if for no other reason."

"I like your sister very much indeed," he said. "I always did in the old days, when we used to play pirates and things."

"Oh, I do love this Ispahan waltz," she said. "It is one of the best that ever was written. I feel that I could dance on for ever, for ever dance, like the gentleman in Browning's poem."

"I only wish we could," he said; but the dance drew to an end before he could even ask who Browning was, and what the gentleman had done to have to dance for ever. She wouldn't have known had he asked, as she had only read J. K. S.'s parody, though this would not have mattered to him. After the dance she wanted some lemonade, which he brought for her. When he brought it, the man called Dick, who had been in the race with him, the man with a face like an unbaked loaf, was talking to her, sitting beside her on the settle. This was really almost the limit of bad luck. However, Dick went as George drew near.

"All right, Dick," she said; "ours is the next but one."

"Right, Carrie," Dick said.

Who the devil was Dick to be calling her Carrie? "Who is that chap, Carrie?" he asked.

"Who? Dick?" she said. "I thought everybody knew Dick. He's my second cousin, who has come to live at Tencombe."

"Is he married?"

"Who? Dick married? No, indeed. He's a dear, and a very good sort, and thoroughly understands shorthorns,

but he says women are beyond him. His brother never married, either."

This report made Dick more acceptable; but the sitting-out time with Carrie had somehow been spoiled: it was difficult to bring it back with any warmth of agreement. "I do wish that we could live over good times again and again," he said; "I would dance that last dance with you, without stopping, for a year."

"It was a good dance," she said; "but I expect that the gunpowder would run out of the heels of our boots long before the year was out. And we should feel the need of a devilled bone from time to time."

"It would be an angelled bone if you touched it," he said.

"Well done, George," she said. "But it is better that the good times should be rare. Too much good time is as bad and as boring as too little."

"How do you know?" he asked. "Have you ever had too much good time, or too little?"

"No," she said, "I never have. I've always kept the happy medium, with two new frocks a year."

"Only two?" he asked.

"Well, only two that I call frocks. The rest are necessary garments, but not the delight of the eye and the pride of life."

"Oh, dear," George said. "There's the band beginning for the next dance. Can't you cut it and stay here?"

"Alas! no, George," she said. "For the next partner is Nick, and here he comes to claim me."

However, George's turn came later in the evening, after the supper, when the quality of the evening had fallen. Many men came from the supper somewhat the worse for

champagne. A very rowdy set of lancers followed, in which, in the last figure, some of the men with linked arms, shouting, stamping, singing, and whistling, made maidens frightened, and chaperones indignant. After this came a polka, to an adaptation of the tune of "John Peel." As soon as the band struck up the opening bars of this, some of the bolder spirits insisted on singing the song before the dance could be danced. The room was now in a somewhat rowdy state.

"Come along, we'll sit out this, Carrie," George said. "It'll take some little while to quiet these fellows."

"I never saw them quite so quiet," Carrie said.

"It's some job lot of champagne that the management had over from the races," George said. "Come this way."

"Where does this lead? I don't know this place," Carrie said.

"It's rather a snug, quiet place," he said. "Out of the noise. And not many come."

He settled her into the settle and sat beside her. Three or four men who had brought hunting horns for this occasion now blew their best, paused, catcalled, and blew again. The view-halloos of the singers did not waken the dead, but excited rivals in the street outside. These noises were all remote, however, in that curtained corridor.

"There won't be much more fun in the evening," Carrie said. "Father will finish his rubber and then remove us. The men are not quite perfect company at this stage."

"Champagne soon loses its effect," George said. "They'll be quiet enough after another couple of dances."

"I'm not quite so sure," Carrie answered. "They are

apt to replenish the failing fire. There are some very queer people here."

"I hope you've enjoyed it in spite of them?"

"Yes. Very much indeed."

"You've been easily the belle, Carrie. There's no one here in the same street with you. You must have seen them all staring and whispering, 'Isn't she lovely?'"

"They were whispering, 'It isn't all her own,' if they were whispering at all."

"Not they, Carrie. They have been all just at your feet with admiration. The women quite as much as the men."

She looked at him with pleasure, but his face made her heart go suddenly down.

"I say, Carrie," he said; "you must have seen the kind of way I think about you. I just adore you. I've adored you from the moment I saw you that Sunday. Will you marry me, Carrie?"

"No, George," she said. "I can't do that."

"Oh, don't be so awful and final."

"It is final, George, my dear; I'm engaged."

"What?"

"I'm an engaged woman."

"Oh, good God! Good God! And I've no chance." She rose to her feet to give him a moment to recover. "All right, Carrie," he said. "That's that. The thing I want is your happiness. May I know who it is? I'd like to congratulate him on his luck. I'd rather hear it from you, if it is to be told."

"Yes, George, it can be told to you, but must not be told elsewhere for some few days. I am engaged to your brother Nick."

"What? To Nick?"

"Yes, George."

"When, then? May I ask that?"

"Yes, this evening, at home; before we came here."

"To my brother Nick?"

"Yes. I shall be your sister, George, if that can be any good."

"I'm a bit dazed, Carrie. Don't think that I'll ever not wish your happiness. It'll be a memorable, lovely dance to you. I'm sorry I've brought in this at the end to spoil it. I've not spoilt it?"

"No indeed, George; don't think that."

"I was a silly ass not to see. Look here. Those chaps are raising Cain down in the ballroom. I'd better take you to your father. We can reach the sort of foyer through the door below, without going through the scrum. Shall we come along, then?"

He led her through a passage to the ante-room, where he had first seen her that evening, when she had told her story. There he found Jane Harridew already cloaked. She looked hard at George, and made up her mind about the case.

"Father has gone to see about the carriage," she said. "Will you get your things on, Carrie? Lou is upstairs, and Sandy is coming in a minute." As soon as Carrie had gone upstairs, she said in a low voice, "I'm afraid you've had a toss, George?"

"I?" he said. "No fear."

"I was afraid you were riding for a fall," she said. "But these things don't go as common sense would have them; do they?"

He was trying to say something neat about common-sense people being pretty common, when Lou came down-

stairs cloaked. There was a good deal of hallooing ringing out from the ballroom.

"Rattler's jocund offspring are rather scouring the Vale," Lou said. "So wisdom's self is seeking to sweet retired solitude."

Old Harridew entered, buttoning up his coat at the throat. "Ha, Childrey," he said. "Good of you to look after my girls. These dances will have to be stopped. A sort of rag-tag-and-bobtail come in to them now, who make the room a bear garden. There was a time when a man could take ladies to these places; now one would hesitate to take a Hottentot. Where's Carrie now? Is she safe?"

"I'm here, Father dear," Carrie said, as she came gaily down the stairs behind him. The little jewel in her hair caught the fire-light and made her beauty unearthly. They all went down into the night air and Tatchester High Street. George saw them away in their carriage. He watched it go up the little rise which led out of Tatchester town. He went upstairs again, and came upon Nick in a refreshment room, chatting business with old Ridden, who had timber to dispose of.

"Nick," he said, "if Mr. Ridden will excuse me, can I have a word with you a moment, now?"

Nick put down his glass and cigarette, the one untasted, the other unlit; he had a way of seeming social without being so. He followed George into a lonely corridor.

"I hear you're engaged to Carrie, Nick?" George said.

"Yes. I have that honour."

"My God!" George said. He could not say anything more, but the sight of his Sunday-shining brother almost

made him sick. He went down to the ballroom where the girl, Violet, met him with wide, reproachful eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Childrey," she said. "This dance is ours. Wherever have you been? I've waited such ages."

"I'm sorry," he said; "I am most awfully sorry." He danced with her for some minutes, and remembered afterwards that she had seemed frightened; possibly she had thought him drunk. The world seemed to have no meaning. Near the door he saw a drunken man, in the Hunt dress, imitating the conjuror by pulling things from a hat: from time to time, as he flung the things down, he shouted, "Gone away."

George walked out into the street, where a groom held a spirited horse that was harnessed to a dog-cart.

"Whose is this?" George asked.

"Mr. Washington's, sir," the groom said.

"That's right," George said, giving the man a shilling, and climbing to the seat. "Let him go. Come on, boy." He gathered up the reins and the groom, nothing doubting, let go. The horse surged off on the instant. George kept him to it, shouted, and cut him with the whip. It was nearly one in the morning.

At a little distance from Tatchester he determined to drive through the Hope to look once more on the Manor where Carrie lived, and where she had become engaged. He kept saying to himself, "If it had been at the dance, I could have understood it; but in cold blood, at home, to Nick." He had rather that it had been Vaughan, or Mike, or even Catlington. "That creature, Nick!" he thought, "with Carrie." That dirty hand on a rose; it did not bear thinking of.

He got down at the gate into the Lower Hope; he se-

cured the horse to a binder in the fence, and broke open the gate from its withy-bands: he flung it wide open. In casting loose the now frantic horse he could not get to his seat in time. The horse bolted into the rutty ride of the Hope, the wheel struck the gatepost, the trap swayed away and struck again, the wheel came off and George was pitched out. He landed dazed but unhurt, picked himself up and ran after the horse, who was now down, about a hundred yards away, kicking what was left of the trap. George flung himself upon the horse, cleared the wreck, he never knew how, and rode on through the wood towards the Manor. He heard a poacher's gun on the far side of the covert, and many owls were calling.

Outside the Hope he rode hard till he came through the Squire's copse, to the bartons of the home farm. Dogs barked at him as he rode in. He rode the reeking horse into the tallat, cast off his harness, flung a couple of empty hop-pockets over him, and tore an armful of hay for him from a rick. Then he ran out and on, across the shrubberies, to the tennis-courts. What memories those courts roused.

Plainly the party had returned, for lights burned in the upper windows, in the rooms of the three girls, and in the guest room where Sandy was sleeping. "She is in there," he thought bitterly, "thinking of Nick, and praying for Nick. And all that lovely dream is gone, and all that companionship is over."

The lights went out one by one, first Sandy's, then Jane's, then Lou's. Carrie's two windows showed a light for a long time, but at last that light, too, went suddenly out. An owl came down on to a stump near George, and tore something, with chacking cries between the tears.

As George turned away into the copse he stumbled into a kneeling man. "What in blazes?" he said. In the moonlight he saw that it was Catlington. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Catlington."

"Yes," Catlington said, "I cannot sleep very well. I wander much at night."

"I can't sleep, either," George said.

"Sleep no more," Catlington said:

"The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe.
The poor man's wealth.

"I have not known proper sleep now for five weeks and three days. But for the suffering, one would think it not life; 'one dreadful now,' like hell. Sometimes, I ask, is this hell, justly due for my iniquity?"

"Hell falls on many who haven't had the fun of iniquity," George said.

"Mr. Childrey," the frail man said, "there is trial as well as punishment. If I could think mine trial, I could bear it; but it is punishment for setting my eyes away from God's task. If I am ever to be saved, it is to be so as by fire."

"She wouldn't have you?" George said.

"No, Mr. Childrey," the little man said. "God corrected His servant in that way. And it is almost harder than I can bear."

"Every man, woman and child now living has said that at some time," George said. "But they go on living, all except a few crazy ones. Life hurts like hell, but they go on. Why?"

"Because God has a purpose for them, Mr. Childrey."

"What purpose? Tell me that. What is the purpose?"

"To learn and to declare the glory of God, Mr. Childrey."

"And if they can't learn it and don't declare it?"

"Then they suffer, as I do, and as you must, or you would not talk like that."

They had walked out of the Manor grounds into the lane where George had punched Vaughan's head, "rescuing Carrie from the dragon" as he had called it. Every place in the countryside had power to pain from the abundance of his memories of her.

"I must be getting home," George said.

"Forgive me," Catlington said. "Your dress is disordered. You have no hat, no collar, no tie. And you are in evening dress, with no overcoat. Can I help in anything?"

"Not in anything, thanks," George said. "And our ways part here. Good morning."

He walked back to the Bartons, which he reached at about four o'clock. He let himself in, went to the dining-room, and sat there at the table, staring across the room until the cocks were crowing. He went up to his bedroom and took off his clothes, meaning to try to sleep. As he turned out his pockets he noticed that he had her dance-programme: he had taken it as they had gone together to the inn-corridor. Plainly stamped upon it was the capital "N" of Nick's writing. The thought that that "N" was now to be scrawled or dashed all over her made him faint. There was no sleep for him lying there when he thought of this.

After an hour of torment he dressed in riding clothes and went out to see the work of the farm started. He told Will that he would hunt that day, on Kilkenny, at

the meet three miles away, at the ruined nunnery called St. Margarets. He had not meant to hunt, but the thought of the morning without hunting was more than he could stand. "I must do something," he kept saying. "If I can't hunt, or go fast, or marry the first girl I meet, I shall either go mad or die. I can't stand this."

He galloped across country all the way to the meet on Merry Grig. Going fast was an alleviation to him, but Merry Grig could not go fast enough for a mind diseased. He reached St. Margarets early: he was the first rider there, so he rode to and fro in the sun, envying the nuns who were out of it, and longing to be galloping at the edge of the world that a resolute rider could go over.

In the stable-yard of the inn, the Coach and Horses, he walked up and down while Kilkenny was made ready. One or two men hailed him; he answered them absently. They thought that no doubt he had had a wet night at the ball and was feeling the morning. Two country-women were sitting on the inn upping-stock: he caught fragments of their talk whenever he passed them.

"The doctor says as I've got a thing growing inside me. He won't say if it's summat as I've ate, or summat as I've drunk. But he says he'll cut 'em when he's big enough."

"Ah," the other said; "that'll be a frog in the water. My sister's husband swallowed one. They grow inside you almost as big as dogs, and you can feel 'em jumping, trying to get out."

"No, I don't mind the jumping feeling," the first said. "I'd be only too glad if he would jump, and jump right out. No, it's the coming cold all over, so that I don't know sometimes whether I'm not dead."

"Ah," the other said; "that's when they get at the heart and put their pawses round it."

When George rode out of the yard to the ruins, the hounds were on the green field which had once been the nuns' garden. The girl, Violet, was there, petting one of the hounds. Looking about to see who was there, he saw Carrie in the Harridews' trap with Nick beside her. Nick had not caught the morning express, after all.

"After all, he's caught everything else," George muttered.

A man near him was saying: "Did you hear about old George Washington last night? Someone sneaked his trap and horse from the ballroom. The trap hasn't been found, but the horse turned up at the stable this morning."

"It was a wet night by all accounts," the other man said.

"A bit damp, here and there."

"Any idea who took the trap?"

"No, none. The groom said it was a gentleman in a shirt-front; he supposed it was Mr. Washington."

"I took it," George called aloud. "I was in rather a hurry to get away. The trap's in Lower Hope Wood, all that's left of it. I'll see Mr. Washington about it later." He did not know the two men; he had noticed the first speaker at the dance. The talk ended there, for the hounds moved off on the instant for the Whin, and George went on ahead to avoid meeting Nick and Carrie. Their image pursued him, however.

The Whin was a twenty acre piece of bad land on the outskirts of the wood; it grew clumps of gorse, some thorn-trees, and several thickets of sloe; it was a very good place for an outlying fox.

George was keeping abreast of Robin as he ran the hounds through the Whin before drawing the wood. He had always loved the sight of hounds working. As they went in, he had his eye on Arrogant, who almost instantly gave tongue and went away. Arrogant was good enough for him and for Robin, and for the rest of the pack. George and Robin were round at the end of the Whin before anybody else knew what had happened. They got there just in time to see a dog-fox going away for Scurr Wood, with the pack streaming out in cry behind him.

"Here's another good 'un, Mr. Childrey," Robin said.

"By George, yes," George said, putting Kilkenny at it like a greyhound from the slips. "I'll lead the lot this day," he muttered, "if I never hunt again."

For three miles he led; then for the fourth, on the best clean grass in the world; but the fifth mile was a deeper country; and here Bill Ridden thundered up, Bill on Chinese White, and Charles Cothill on his best, with a thick thorn fence ahead, and beyond the fence what looked like a larch-wood. Bill rode to the right, shouting something; Charles rode to the left, shouting something. It seemed to George that they were warning him; in fact, he knew that they must be, for they shouted again; someone behind him shouted, and then Charles even tried to head him.

"I don't care," George said to his horse, "you'll jump what's in front of you; if it's the hob of hell itself." So saying, he put him at it.

He had a sudden wave of knowledge from the horse that it was an appalling place, that there was something beyond; but there was no time to think of that. "If it's the hob of hell," he cried, "go over." Over they went into

Stonepits Old Quarry, the horse into deep water, unhurt, and George on to the stone.

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When he recovered consciousness, he thought that he was in a ship at sea, because there was a curtained bunk and a lamp in gimbals, and the curtains were moving as the ship moved, and he was lying on the deck all numb, wherever he wasn't all pain. Someone (a man), said, "How is he now?" from somewhere behind him. Then a woman, whom he took to be Carrie, bent over him. She had Carrie's face, yet she was tanned by the wind and stalwart-looking.

"Carrie," he called to her.

"No, not Carrie, Mr. Childrey," Maid Margaret said, putting a cool sponge across his face. "You keep still; don't talk. We'll soon have you to the hospital."

"Don't throw me away," he moaned in an agony of sudden pain.

"I'll not throw you away," Maid Margaret said. "I've only just found you. Now shut your eyes and don't talk."

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She was the woman whom he married; but it had cost him some pain to find her.

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